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# PHILIP LYNDON'S TROUBLES.

BY  
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Man-like is it to fall into sin,  
Fiend-like is it to dwell therein,  
Christ-like is it for sin to grieve,  
God-like is it all sin to leave.

LONGFELLOW.


IN THREE VOLUMES.  
VOL. III.



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# PHILIP LYNDON'S TROUBLES.

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## CHAPTER I.

### STANTON'S VIGIL.

‘ Have I not had to wrestle with my lot ?  
Have I not suffered things to be forgiven ?  
Have I not had my brain seared, my heart riven ?  
Hopes sapped, name blighted, life’s life lied away ?’

BYRON.

WHEN Stanton arrived, at the appointed time, he was shown into the dining-room, where Tom was sitting kicking his heels, all alone.

‘ Why did you not come ‘to supper?’ asked that young gentleman.

‘ In the first place, I was not asked.’

‘ You surely did not wait for that !’

‘ And in the second place, I should not have

come if I had been, for my mother and my cousins and Harry have come home.'

'What a pity that you had to come here!'

'They will not have run away by to-morrow, I hope,' replied Stanton, smiling. 'But I had better proceed to business, I suppose.'

'Jones will be in the room on the right,' said Tom, 'and you are to call him if you want anything; and Fanny will have her ears pricked up, for she is very suspicious of you, I can tell you. I nearly let the cat out of the bag about the letter in trying to defend you.'

'You had better leave me to my fate,' was the reply.

'Well, I don't like to hear people blamed when they aren't to blame,' said Tom, as they went upstairs. 'You know where I am if you want me,' he added, as he opened the door of his brother's room.

Stanton went in, and Jones came out, after giving what he thought a necessary caution. The expression of Philip's face was calm and quiet. There was more of resignation and less of despair in it. He grasped Stanton's hand, and then lay still without speaking.

'My dear Lyndon,' said Stanton, at length,



‘I think that it would be much better to let our conference be till you are stronger. You are getting better now, and there will be other opportunities in the course of the next week or two.’

‘No, Stanton,’ replied Philip decidedly, but gently ; ‘it preys upon my mind. I have thought of nothing else since you were here. I keep going over it again and again, till it drives me almost crazy ; and when I have told you all, it will be a great relief.’

‘Well, I want to do what will be the best for you ; but there is no hurry. We have all the night before us.’

Philip lay for some time silent, and Stanton sat looking at the ink-stains on the carpet. His mind was busy, speculating on the glimpse that he had had during his last visit of his friend's position, and wondering what was the nature of the revelation which was to follow.

‘When I was at college,’ Philip began, at length, ‘having occasion to change my lodgings, I became acquainted with the gentleman who was mentioned in that letter as G——. He occupied the rooms next mine. We took to each other at once. Perhaps the differences in our dispositions made our pleasure in each

other's society the greater. Our tastes were both rather gay ; but mine, at any rate, were not vicious. G—— introduced me to Captain A——, who appeared to be much more of a *roué* than did G——. However, his was a pleasant house at which to visit. Mrs. A—— was one of the most beautiful women I have ever seen.'

Philip paused and uttered an involuntary sigh at this point of the narrative.

'G—— told me,' he continued, 'that she was not the Captain's wife. However, that was not my affair. I soon found that she and the Captain did not live happily together. The spell, whatever it was, that had held them together was broken. I admired her very much. I was interested in her, and I pitied her.'

'And you came to love her, I suppose ?' interposed Stanton.

'I had no thought of that,' was the reply ; 'but I soon discovered that she loved me. If I had had a friend at hand like you, Stanton, all might have been different. However, I had not. I ought to have shunned the house after that, but I did not. I was not master of myself. I seemed to have no power to struggle against

the spell which she cast over me, and I became her lover. In my self-reproach I told G—— what had happened ; but he dissembled his real feelings, and treated it as a man of the world treats such things. Well, I used to meet her in the garden, which was a very secluded one. One evening when I went I found the captain waiting for me. He had been drinking, and in his blind fury he rushed upon me, taking me by surprise. In the struggle we fell into the river. He had grasped me so that I could not free myself. In a few moments all would have been over. I had no time to think whether it would have been better to have died than to have had his death upon my conscience, and—I strangled him !

Stanton sat as if spell-bound, and Philip wiped the drops of perspiration from his brow.

‘ Were you not suspected ? ’ asked Stanton, at length.

‘ No. He was not found for several days, and the body was so much discoloured, owing to his intemperate habits, that no signs of violence could be detected.’

‘ Was he not missed ? ’

‘ He was often away from home for days



together—no one knew where,’ replied Lyndon. ‘I got out of the river unperceived,’ he continued, ‘and soon afterwards there came on a drenching storm, which accounted for my wet clothes. I returned to my lodgings, and poured out my horror and my remorse to G——. For a moment the mask fell off, and showed me what there was beneath. I saw his gratified revenge, his exultation in my wretchedness. He had been a lover of Mrs. A——, and I had supplanted him. He had laid a trap for my destruction, and I had fallen into it. We had a bitter quarrel, and we parted. I sought lodgings as far away from him as I could, and soon after I left the college. I had written to Mrs. A——, telling her that we must meet no more, and counselling her to return to her own friends.’

This, then, was the dreadful secret which had haunted Lyndon, and remorse for which had poisoned his after-life.

‘A curse seemed to follow me after that,’ resumed Philip. ‘I won high honours at the college, but they brought me no pleasure ; and instead of, as my friends hoped, rising high in my profession, I obtained a situation as an

army surgeon, and went to India, where I stayed until my father's failing health compelled me to return. I found things in such a state, that the only way was to leave the town ; and hearing of this practice, I came over and decided to take it. I hoped, by having it entirely in my own hands, to pay off the old debts and make a fresh beginning. My horror at what had happened prevented me from plunging into the sins which had been my ruin, but I had not virtue enough to choose the right path and to keep to it. The wine-cup and the gaming-table offered temptations too irresistible to one in whose bosom remorse for the past and despair of happiness in the future were ever present. When I saw your cousin, Stanton, I felt what I had missed. I realised truly what a polluted thing I was ; and there awoke within me the will, and the power too, to begin the purer life for which, before, I had only longed aimlessly. Of course, in cherishing such a hope as I did, I knew that I must have very great difficulties to encounter. I did not heed that, if only they were such as could be conquered by energy and strength of will ; but they are not. Stanton, my sin has found me

out. I am like the wild beast that has been tracked to his lair, where he awaits the hunter's last fell stroke.'

'Has it been discovered, then?' asked Stanton.

'You have perhaps guessed that Mrs. A. is the Belle of that letter. She came to see me, on that night when I caught Tom listening, as I thought, to our conversation. I was almost mad when I found that she had tracked me. She has been married since we parted.'

'Not Mrs. Gordon, surely?' exclaimed Stanton.

'Yes; she is Belle,' replied Philip, with a sigh. 'You may imagine what I suffered, Stanton; and she heard of my attachment to your cousin, and, in vexation at not being able to regain her old power over me, she lent herself, as I partly guessed at the time, to the plans of G——, at least as far as threats were concerned. The price that I was to pay for immunity from persecution was to withdraw all pretension to win your cousin's favour. God knows, I had little hope of that, Stanton; but I could not bend before a menace; besides, what were my life, if all hope were taken from



it of that which alone would make it worth having ?

‘It was a noble resolution,’ said Stanton. ‘But what motive could G—— have had for persecuting you in this manner ?’

‘Revenge for having, as he considered, robbed him of his love, although it was quite unintentional on my part ; and the fact of his having betrayed me deepened rather than satiated his hatred.’

‘But how came G—— to know that you were here ? Who is he ?’

‘One who has shown his hatred unmistakably,’ replied Philip, meaningly.

‘You don’t mean George ?’ cried Stanton.

‘Yes, I do.’

‘Lyndon !’

‘It is your brother George who has acted the part of which I have told you,’ said Philip, sadly. ‘He has drawn the toils around me from which there is no escape.’

‘I have long suspected that George was not what he ought to be, but I had no idea that he was capable of such acts as you describe,’ said Stanton, indignantly. ‘His connection with Mrs. Gordon—his baseness and treachery

towards you—and, almost worst of all, his long cherished revenge—it seems scarcely possible.'

'You will soon have evidence of it,' answered Philip, gloomily.

'In what way?'

'When I am well enough to leave this house, the law will claim its due.'

'How do you know that?' cried Stanton.

Philip shaded his eyes with his hand.

'Tom told you,' he said in a low voice, 'what I had done. Syms was waiting for me. The temptation to escape my fate, if possible, was too great for me. I had no time to get what would have made it sure beyond all chance of my being frustrated, for I knew that Tom would be back directly. I took the nearest bottle that I could reach, which would effect my purpose. But it was not to be, and I must meet my fate with what fortitude I can. I shall save them the trouble of worrying their prey, by making a full confession of what I have done, and they must do with me what they will. I suppose it will be to spend the coming years in the company of those who have been guilty of like crimes with myself.'

‘I cannot help thinking that there must be some mistake,’ said Stanton.

Philip gave Stanton an account of the various occasions on which George had threatened him, dwelling the most upon the last, which had so taken hold of his imagination. Stanton listened with something of the feeling of one who, in a horrid nightmare, sees gradually approaching the catastrophe which is to overwhelm him, without his having any power to avert it. He remained long silent, absorbed in deep reflection.

‘It is of no use, Stanton,’ said Philip, at length; ‘the power of the law is set in motion. No human effort can stop it now—my doom is fixed. It will be a terrible blow to my brother and sister,’ he continued, in a voice that quivered with emotion. ‘I have not done for either of them what I ought, but I have tried to make a home for them. Fanny will in time get over the shock, for I have not won her love as I might have done; but in Tom the wound will be deeper. He is young to bear such grief. He has loved me with an affection that I have ill-deserved, and which forms my only tie to life. You must comfort him, Stanton, when he

is grieving over the disgrace and shame that my sin has brought.'

'I will, Lyndon!' replied Stanton, pressing his friend's hand, while his own heart was wrung with bitter anguish.

'If it had been granted me to die,' resumed Philip, after they had remained some time in silence, 'by the time that the grass had been green above my breast, my friends would perhaps have come to think more kindly of me than they do now. The graves beneath the trees in the cemetery look very peaceful, Stanton. The quiet and silence of the tomb seem tempting after the storm and struggle of my life. Your cousin told me, one day, that I must learn to bear my cross; I have been trying, Stanton, but it is very heavy. The last flicker of human hope is gone, and I have not learnt the path to heaven, along which I hoped that she might one day lead me; but I shall never see her more.'

Stanton's heart was full. He had no words with which to comfort the stricken man. There was a long pause, during which Philip lay with his face expressing a regretful and mournful tenderness.

‘My repentance has been deep and bitter, Stanton,’ he resumed, ‘but it cannot undo the past, neither can it bring me peace. My sin is always present with me. I feel its stain within my soul. In the dreary lot which is to be my future, I will try to brace my heart to bear my burden patiently. I have sown the wind, and I must reap the whirlwind.’

‘God will give you strength, if you trust in Him,’ said Stanton.

‘Ah, Stanton! if my mother had lived, I should never have been what I am now. I have often wondered whether she has looked down from heaven, and pitied me in all my troubles. Stanton, you have more to be thankful for in the purity of your home than you will ever know. We had no one to look after us, and we grew up sadly without guidance. I have struck upon the breakers, and must perish; but I hope Tom will be saved before it is too late. He has a noble heart, not so full of stormy passions as mine has been. But mine is quenched at last, Stanton. My only wish now is to die, but that may not be. I must bear my cross onward to the end.’

Stanton kneeled down by the side of the



bed, and, with his hand in that of Philip's, he sent up, in earnest pleading tones, a prayer for strength and faith for him to drink the bitter cup.

In the silence that followed, Philip felt as if an answer had come down in a holy brooding presence which seemed to fill the room. He lay so long without moving, that at length Stanton looked at him rather anxiously, and found that he was asleep. He woke after a time in great exhaustion, but, on taking the medicine, he went off again into a calm and apparently deep and peaceful sleep.

There was for some time in the room a perfectly unbroken silence. The first sound which Stanton heard was that of a low tap at the door, which the next instant opened noiselessly, and there appeared what, in its whiteness and its silent gliding movement, certainly rather justified Jane's impression of its being a ghost. Stanton held up his finger and pointed to the bed; and Tom, for he it was, beckoned to him to come out.

‘Is he asleep?’

‘Yes.’

‘That’s right,’ said Tom, nodding his head.

‘We forgot to tell you to go into the dining-room when you were hungry.’

‘I don’t want anything, thank you.’

‘You had better have something now that you have a chance,’ replied Tom, ‘and I’ll mount guard the while ;’ and he stepped noiselessly across the floor with his naked feet. He was waiting at the door when Stanton came up.

‘Do let me stay with him, and you lie down.’

‘No ; I am not tired. You be off to bed.’

‘Is he happier, do you think ? Have you cheered him up ?’

‘I think he is not quite so miserable. At any rate, he is more resigned.’

‘I don’t want him to be resigned. That’s not like Phil, and it looks as if he were going to die.’

‘I don’t think that he is going to die.’

‘Isn’t he ? Are you sure ?’ cried Tom, his face lighting up.

‘Well, I think so.’

‘Oh, if he gets well, that will be jolly ! And now his ladylove is come back, he will be happier.’

‘I hope so. Be off with you, this minute.’

‘I’ll go and tell Fan, first. She has been

sitting up all this time to look after you.' And off he glided.

It was an immense relief to Fanny when she heard Tom's news. She went to bed, and the brother and sister were soon asleep. It was still early when Tom appeared again; this time in less scanty apparel. Philip was now awake, and ready for breakfast; so Tom went down, returning quickly with tea and toast.

'Now, Stanton,' said Philip, 'you had better go and have some breakfast; and you too, Tom. I am well enough, now, to be left for that length of time.'

Stanton felt a little reluctant; but, thinking that Philip might construe his hesitation into a dread of trusting him, he thought it the best to comply with the request.'

'Oh my!' said Tom, as soon as they were outside the door. 'What a lot of ink there is on the carpet! Did you see it?'

'Yes; I saw it.'

Jane, with the intention of concealing it, had laid over the ink a fresh piece of carpet, which, however, had developed an extraordinary faculty of being kicked up on every available oppor-

tunity, thereby drawing attention to the guilty stain.

‘Well, I did not do that, at any rate,’ observed Tom. ‘Phil seems ever so much better this morning,’ he continued. ‘I think you had better come every night. We shall soon have him all right again.’ And on the strength of that Tom ventured to jump down the last half-dozen stairs, and then he scampered into the dining-room, somewhat after his old fashion.

‘Now, then,’ he said, as he rang the bell for the coffee, ‘I will pour out, and you shall attend to the other things. You see what there is, and if you want what there isn’t, you must sing out.’

‘All right,’ replied Stanton; and he proceeded to cut some ham for himself and Tom.

‘I thought you looked a little doubtful about leaving Phil,’ observed the latter gentleman, as he handed Stanton his coffee.

‘Well, the idea entered my head; but I believe that I was unjust.’

‘Besides, he promised me he wouldn’t,’ replied Tom; ‘so there’s no danger. I think we must do with Phil as he used to do with me, when I was a little boy, and he went out for the

day. He used to make me promise to be good all the time.'

'And did you keep it?'

'Well, I tried to.'

'You did not try always, I suppose?'

'Well, one can't be always trying, you know,' said Tom. 'I shall go and see Harry, presently,' he continued. 'You must call out when you want some more coffee, for very likely I shan't see,' he said, interrupting himself. 'I must stay with Phil, first—before I go to see Harry, I mean—while Fanny and Jones have breakfast. I expect Fanny will have spirit enough for a flirtation, now Phil's better. She has been as dull as an old cow, lately. I think Jones is ready.'

'Indeed!' said Stanton, quietly.

'I have caught him once or twice before the glass, twiddling his bit of a moustache,' replied Tom, imitating the action on his own smooth lip. 'Stanton!' he said suddenly, opening his eyes very wide, and looking gravely at that gentleman, 'do you think that your cousin has turned off Phil?'

'I don't know that she has ever had him on,' answered Stanton.



‘Oh yes, she has,’ was the sage reply ; ‘or something very like it, at least. I am pretty sure she likes him.’

‘So am I,’ thought Stanton. ‘But I am not going to tell you that, you monkey.’

‘I should think,’ continued Tom, taking a great spoonful of mustard, ‘that when he is well enough to be downstairs, she will come and comfort him. She ought to, at any rate. Don’t you think that she will, Stanton ?’

‘My dear Tom, you don’t understand these things.’

‘Well, I don’t suppose I do. It seems to me that when people want to flirt, they go straight at it ; but when they are really in love, there is no end of difficulties and bother.’

‘That is true enough,’ thought Stanton, checking a sigh.

‘Did Phil say much ?’ asked Tom, after a pause, during which he had been too busy to talk.

‘Yes ; a good deal the first part of the night.’

‘Did he tell you what made him do it ?’

‘Yes, he did.’

‘Has he done anything very bad ?’

‘Well, it was bad. But he is very sorry, Tom.’

‘I know he is. What was it, Stanton?’

‘Well, my dear boy, I think that it is better that you should not know.’

‘I dare say it is,’ replied Tom; ‘and then I can say I don’t, if any one should ask me. Poor Phil! I wish he had not done it,’ he added, almost choking himself with a piece of bread. ‘However, it can’t be helped now. I shall not love him any less, but more, I think, because he has been so unhappy.’

‘Poor fellow!’ said Stanton.

‘And is it all right now?’ asked Tom.

‘I cannot promise so much as that; but I hope that it will not be so bad as he thinks.’

‘Mind and din that into him well,’ said Tom; ‘and, Stanton, you must really look after him now, for he is too much for me.’

‘I rather think he is,’ answered Stanton, smiling.

‘There goes!’ cried Tom, as he tipped over the coffee that he was handing to Stanton; ‘and it’s gone all over the butter. Ain’t it a pretty mess? And that’s all there was, too; but I’ll ring for some more.’

‘Oh no, don’t ring. I shall do very well,’ replied Stanton.

‘Well, I must ring for Juanita to come and clear up the mess, at any rate. She had better make haste and get a clean tablecloth on, before the others come down and catch us.’

‘I must be off,’ said Stanton.

‘You’ll be just in time for a second breakfast,’ observed Tom. ‘You can have some coffee, to make up for what was spilt.’ And he performed a series of somersets on his way to the door, which, after such a hearty breakfast, would have deranged the digestion of any one but a boy.

‘Now, be steady!’ said Stanton, as Tom turned towards the stairs.

‘All right! I’ll be as still as a mouse in a mill,’ was Tom’s reply, as he stole upstairs on tip-toe.

## CHAPTER II.

## A LITTLE LIGHT.

‘The sorriest wight may find release of pain,  
The driest soil suck in some moistening shower ;  
Time goes by turns, and chances change by course,  
From foul to fair, from better hap to worse.’

SOUTHWELL.

STANTON, as soon as he got outside the gate, instead of going down the Walks, went in the direction of the police-station. The superintendent, however, had gone out of town by the early train, and was not expected back until the evening ; so Stanton left a message for him to call, and returned home, arriving there just as Harry and his two cousins came downstairs. Stanton sat down with them to breakfast, to have the cup of coffee of which Tom’s misad-

venture had cheated him. Mrs. Mansfield, being rather tired, did not make her appearance.

Stanton had seen Blanche only for a few minutes on the previous evening, in the bustle of the arrival; but this morning, on a more deliberate inspection, he was struck by something in her that was different from what he had seen before. It was not, altogether, that she looked more womanly, though he observed that too; neither was it that there was less sweetness in her face; but there was more thought and feeling; and the expression was more developed. There was a look in her eyes as if the soul had been awakened.

‘How is poor Lyndon?’ asked Reginald.

‘He is better this morning, and I hope he will improve faster now.’

‘How is Tom?’ inquired Harry.

‘He is all right. He is getting frisky again.’

‘Poor boy!’ said Blanche.

‘It will be the other part of the household that will have to be pitied soon,’ replied Stanton, ‘if he develops much more in that direction.’

‘So I was thinking,’ observed Reginald.

‘What frame of mind is Lyndon in?’ he asked.

‘He really is very penitent for his past sins.



‘There is no doubt about that,’ said Stanton. ‘A man in the state in which he is would make no pretensions, even were he inclined, which he is not.’

‘No ; I must give him credit for that kind of honesty,’ replied Reginald. ‘He would rather make himself appear worse than better than he is, I think. I am very glad indeed to hear you say that he has been brought to see the error of his ways. Was he very open with you ?’

‘I must betray no confidences,’ was the answer.

‘The seal of the confessional is sacred,’ observed the curate, smiling.

‘Mind you don’t get into trouble with the bishop, Stanton,’ remarked Harry.

‘I dare say that it is a relief to him to open his mind to some one,’ said Reginald, for when the frame is stricken down, the conscience asserts its rights, and there is nothing to drown its voice or to silence its reproaches.’

Blanche wondered what Philip had told her cousin, and whether he would speak of it to her. She felt anxious to hear, and yet she dreaded the communication.

‘Here’s Tom !’ cried Harry, as something darted by the window, so quickly, that it was

more from inference than from the testimony of his eyes that Harry had made his statement. The next minute Master Tom was formally announced. He received a warm greeting from the strangers, who all expressed their pleasure at hearing of his brother's improvement.

‘He’s sleeping like a dormouse,’ remarked Tom. ‘He’s been asleep all this time. He did not wake, even when I knocked one of the marble candlesticks off the mantel-shelf and smashed it. Can you come out with me, Harry?’ he asked.

‘Oh yes, certainly,’ said Harry.

‘That boy looks as if he had suffered,’ observed Reginald, when the two were gone out.

‘He has, poor fellow,’ replied Stanton. ‘It has been a terrible time for them all.’

‘I must call on Lyndon,’ said the curate. ‘I don’t know whether he will see me.’

‘You must not expect him to make his confession over again,’ observed Stanton. ‘That would be too much for him.’

‘Oh no; I’ll deal with him tenderly,’ was the reply. ‘If he is really penitent, that is enough—at least, if he gives proof of his penitence by practical results. It is of no use

worrying him ; indeed, it would only have a hardening effect.'

Blanche was very glad to hear her brother speak in this way of Philip. She thought that there might be some chance of his exercising a good influence over her lover if he would be gentle enough, and would be careful not to excite Philip's combativeness, or his dislike of what he called, 'priestly domination.'

She ran upstairs with a bright face to tell her aunt the good news of the invalid.

'My dear, I think that you ought to go and see poor Miss Lyndon,' said Mrs. Mansfield, when she had heard her niece's account. 'Give her my love, and tell her that I will come and see her as soon as I am rested. There will be no danger of your meeting Mr. Philip.'

The moment that Mrs. Mansfield had spoken, it occurred to her that Blanche might not look upon that as a danger to be avoided, and she fell into a course of reflection on the subject which lasted until she came downstairs, where she found Stanton apparently absorbed in the newspaper.

'Stanton, I wish to have a little talk with you,' said Mrs. Mansfield. 'But I am glad

to hear that Mr. Philip is better,' she added.

'Yes, poor fellow!' was his reply. 'I cannot help being very sorry for him.'

'Blanche is very sorry for him, too.'

'How did she take the news of his illness?' asked Stanton, struck by his mother's manner. 'I was thinking of her all the time that I was writing that letter.'

Mrs. Mansfield gave her son a full account of what had passed.

'Bless me! mother,' said Stanton. 'That is a coming out, for Blanche. He'll soon feel out the state of affairs, and a change will come o'er the spirit of his dream. If there is a traitor in the camp, we may as well surrender at discretion, for there will be no resisting the assault in circumstances so perilous.'

'I think that will require a little consideration,' replied his mother, smiling. 'I am not disposed to surrender without exacting terms from the enemy.'

'Well, you must talk to Blanche; she is getting beyond me,' said Stanton, shrugging his shoulders.

'I want to know, Stanton,' resumed his

mother, whether you have made out anything about what George said with regard to him ?

‘ Oh yes ; Lyndon told me all about it.’

‘ Indeed!’ said Mrs. Mansfield, in some surprise.

‘ It was a sad affair,’ said Stanton. ‘ But the worst of it is, that George was implicated in it ; and his share of it, I am sorry to say, was worse than that of Lyndon, for he acted not only from want of principle in the first place, but afterwards from deliberate treachery and revenge, while Lyndon was blinded by passion. That is bad enough, certainly, but not so bad as the other ; and he has repented bitterly, poor fellow.’

‘ I don’t know how it is,’ said Mrs. Mansfield, ‘ but my confidence in George was very much shaken during his illness.’

‘ How strange it is,’ resumed Stanton, ‘ that we have been judging Lyndon, while one of our own household has been worse than he ! I am afraid that we have exulted in our pride of character, and despised poor Lyndon, in much the same way that the Pharisee looked down upon the publican.’

‘ Tell me all about it, Stanton.’

‘ Mother, I cannot do that without asking

Lyndon first ; and Blanche ought to know. It is an awkward affair, truly, and perhaps it will turn her against him. He is audacious enough for anything ; but still, I almost wonder that he has had the impudence to do as he has done, all things considered.'

'She said that he had told her something, some time since,' observed Mrs. Mansfield. 'But I don't know what it was.'

'Told her something?' repeated Stanton, rather startled. 'He surely cannot have told her all.'

'Well, I hoped that Blanche would have married a different kind of man,' observed Mrs. Mansfield, with a sigh.

'It is not come to that, mother,' answered Stanton. 'And if Lyndon's idea about Syms is correct, it never will,' he thought.

'It is as good as come to it, or as bad, whichever it is,' replied his mother. 'I don't know how it has come about,' she continued, 'after all the trouble we have taken. But, Stanton, had you not better go to bed, as you have been up all night?'

'No ; I should not sleep if I did. Really, Lyndon is enough to drive away sleep for a week !'



Stanton went to the bank, but he did not stay there long, for he felt restless and unsettled. He wished the interview with Syms was over.

In the meantime, Blanche was hearing from Fanny many particulars of Philip's illness which they had not heard from Stanton. Blanche's sympathy had opened Fanny's heart, and she was consequently very communicative. It was a great relief to her to pour out the tale of the trouble through which she had passed. With the frankness of her nature, Fanny dwelt upon the minutest incident that could illustrate the situation, from the details of her own journey, with its harrowing suspense, to those of the watchings in the sick-room, and its, to her, partial insight into Philip's mental state. The pen and ink incident was also related, and wondered over, with Fanny's indignation at the result of Stanton's first visit, and her relief at that of his second.

'He has been wonderfully patient so far, I must confess,' Fanny observed, in conclusion. 'But he is getting self-willed again now, and I expect, if we don't let him have his own way in everything, he will be intolerable. How ladies

manage when they have invalid husbands I cannot imagine. I shall let Phil do as he likes, and he must take the consequences. It is a good thing I am not his wife. If ever he has one, she'll find him a handful.'

'Perhaps he will learn to be a little more patient before he gets married,' said Blanche, blushing a little.

'He will have to change into some one else, then,' replied Fanny, decidedly. 'It is the nature of him, and people cannot alter their natures. Though he would never have been half so bad,' she added, 'if my father had not been so severe with him. He is enough to spoil any one's temper.'

Dinner was just finished at Mrs. Mansfield's when the footman announced to Stanton that Mr. Syms wished to see him.

'Syms!' cried Harry. 'No one has broken into the bank, I hope.'

'Or forged a cheque, more likely,' observed Reginald.

'Neither of these disasters has occurred lately, that I am aware of,' replied Stanton, as he left the room.

'I was sorry that I was out, sir, when you

called this morning,' said Syms. 'But I came as soon as I could, sir.'

'You were at Mr. Lyndon's when he was taken ill, I believe?' said Stanton, going to the point at once.

'Yes, sir; and I helped them upstairs with the poor gentleman. I am glad to hear that he is better.'

'So am I,' answered Stanton, reassured by Syms's manner in speaking of Lyndon. 'I found last night,' he continued, 'that his mind had been running on your visit. I suppose I may tell him that it was occasioned by nothing which requires immediate attention?'

'Mr. Lyndon is very keen over anything connected with his work,' observed the policeman. 'Of course, sir, it will have to wait till he is well enough to see me; though I can tell you what it is, sir, if you like, as I know that you will not mention it to any one, sir?'

'Of course not,' replied Stanton.

'You remember the poaching affray at the Hall, some time since, sir?' resumed Syms; 'and that we caught one of the men who attacked the gamekeeper so savagely, sir; but we had no clue to the other, who, according to the

gamekeeper's evidence, was wounded in the hand. Well, sir, there is a man as Mr. Lyndon has been attending to as is wounded in the hand, but whether it is a gunshot wound or not I cannot make out, for the man makes a mystery of it, sir. He is a stranger, and not quite the right sort of man for my purpose. I have no evidence against him, sir, and yet there are some things as look suspicious, as the time corresponding, and such like. But Mr. Lyndon will tell me in a moment about the wound you know, sir, and that will settle the matter—at least if it is not a gunshot wound, sir; and as the man may leave the town any day, I should like to know. Perhaps Mr. Lyndon won't mind telling you, sir.'

'I will tell Mr. Lyndon,' replied Stanton, 'and I have no doubt that he will either see you or send a message.'

'Thank you, sir. I shall be glad to have it settled,' said Syms, as he took his departure.

Stanton set off directly to Lyndon's. He found Philip looking better, but there was a restless and unsettled expression on his face.

'I am afraid, Stanton,' he said, as he grasped his friend's hand, 'that my resolution to submit

will be very hard to carry out. I feel the old impulse to struggle with an irrevocable fate rising within my breast.'

'My dear Lyndon, I am come to tell you that I hope you may not have to encounter what you dread.' And he gave an account of his interview with Syms.

As Stanton spoke there shone a light in Lyndon's eyes like the breaking of a sunbeam through the darkness of a cloud. Then came a sudden revulsion of feeling. He shaded his eyes with his hand, and Stanton could hear, by his convulsive sobs, that his feelings, after their long tension, had found relief in tears.

'Thank God! Stanton,' he murmured, in a broken voice.

There was silence for some time, and then Lyndon said :

'Tell me over again, Stanton.'

He listened attentively during the narrative.

'It is possible that this may be a *ruse* on Syms's part.'

'Well, I thought of that ; but Syms's manner quite reassured me.'

'That is not altogether to be trusted in a policeman,' replied Philip. 'They are often

very clever fellows. I think I had better see him myself, and then I shall feel more secure. I shall be glad to tell him about the poor fellow, who had no more to do with the poaching affray than I had. His wound had been made by a knife, and he got it, he told me, in defending his mother from his father, who had attacked her during a drunken fit.'

'It is too late for you to see Syms to-night,' said Stanton; 'but I will tell him to come to-morrow.'

'Tell him to come very early, and you call in as you go to the bank, and hear what he says, Stanton.'

Stanton promised, and took his leave. Presently Tom came stealing in.

'I am not asleep,' said Philip:

'Oh, Phil! what is the matter? You look so happy.'

'Well, is that against the law?'

'No; but you have not looked like that lately. Have you heard something about Miss Ainslie, Phil?'

'No, you silly boy!'

'Well, she has been here; and Fanny has been telling her all about you.'



‘Not all, I hope,’ said Philip.

‘Fanny,’ said Tom, as she entered, ‘now did you not tell Miss Ainslie all about Phil?’

‘Be quiet, Tom.’

‘Phil is ever so much better. It is a wonder he did not come and catch you.’

‘It is time you went to bed, Tom.’

‘I ain’t going to bed. I am going to stay with Phil.’

‘You may stay with me, and go to bed too,’ said Philip.

‘Hurrah!’ cried Tom; ‘but are you well enough?’

‘Yes, quite.’

‘If you stay with him, Tom, he will be very glad when you are in bed and asleep, I should think.’

‘Tom has been a very good nurse,’ said Philip, looking affectionately at his brother.

Tom’s eyes sparkled, and his cheek flushed at such praise.

Tom had really been very watchful and attentive, and, as far as in him lay, he had been thoughtful. It is true that Philip’s cup of tea, or of beef-tea, found its way on to the counterpane,

instead of into the mouth of the invalid, oftener than was at all necessary ; on which occasions Tom would thankfully observe, that it was a blessing that there was some more, or, that it was a very good thing that the counterpane would wash, or they should have been in a pretty mess.

‘ You may go to bed with a safe conscience, Fanny,’ said Philip, ‘ for I mean to sleep all night, so what is the use of any one sitting up with me ? Make up Tom’s bed beside mine, and then if I want anything, I can wake him.’

‘ Mind you attend to him well, Tom.’

‘ If he does not, I will give such a peal at the bell, that I will wake everybody in the house.’

‘ On those conditions, I will agree,’ replied Fanny, smiling ; and she proceeded to make the necessary arrangements.

Philip, however, found it not so easy as he expected, to put his intention in practice. His whole being was still fluttering with the joy occasioned by his release from the terrible fear that had so long haunted him, and with the thoughts suggested by this change in the situation.

Was it possible that he was really secure from George's animosity? It seemed too good to be true. Then the sweet hopes connected with his love for Blanche, which had apparently died under the pressure of the despair that had almost crushed him, began to spring up, instinct with fresh strong life. And yet, how durst he hope? Even if Blanche were to look upon him with favour, what would Stanton think of his attentions to her, now that he knew his history? Mr. Ainslie and Mrs. Mansfield, too, must be considered.

With all these thoughts surging through his brain, Philip found sleep impossible for some hours. At length, however, the images before his mind became confused and indistinct, and then faded gradually away. He was asleep when Tom woke in the morning, and that young gentleman accordingly reported that he thought Phil must have slept all night, for he had heard nothing of him.

## CHAPTER III.

## RELIEF.

‘It came unto my sorrow-shrouded life,  
Like sunshine on the bosom of the deep.’

A. J. L.

FANNY’S sense of the fitness of things received a violent shock, when Syms presented himself the next morning with a statement that Mr. Lyndon had requested to see him. She would have despatched the superintendent in a very summary fashion ; but, as he said that he had come according to Mr. Stanton Mansfield’s orders, she was obliged to give way. As a last resource, she ran upstairs to remonstrate with her brother.

‘Syms? All right,’ said Philip, eagerly.  
‘Send him up directly.’

‘Philip! It is very wrong of you indeed; I cannot imagine what you are thinking of,’ remonstrated Fanny, oblivious of her resolution to ‘let Phil do as he likes and take the consequences.’

‘Come, Fanny, send him up! It’s no good talking.’

‘You never spoke a truer word, Philip. I think you had better have a bed made up in the surgery, if you are going to begin business.’

‘A sofa in the consulting-room will do. I shall be down there presently,’ he said, as she left the room.

As soon as Syms entered, Philip’s instincts told him that all was right. The policeman expressed his pleasure at seeing Lyndon better, while his manner gave evidence of the mingled admiration and deference that he entertained towards the young surgeon, on account of the promptness and the conscientiousness which he had always shown in the execution of his duty, added to that kind of respectful tenderness which one strong man feels for another, who

has been stricken with so sudden and so violent an illness as had Lyndon.

Philip's manner was particularly gracious, as he listened to the superintendent's statement, and described to him the nature of the wound which the suspected man had received.

'I am very glad indeed,' he said, in conclusion, 'for it would have been a sad thing for the poor man to have been taken up on suspicion.'

'Well, sir, it would not have been exactly pleasant,' was the reply.

'It is a pity that there should be these poaching affrays,' said Lyndon.

'Well, sir, so it is. But you see the gentry like to have their pleasure, and till the law is altered it must be carried out; but it puts a deal o' temptation in the way of them as might keep out of it, sir.'

As soon as Syms was gone, Philip sent for Tom, and, with his assistance and connivance, he was soon dressed, and downstairs in the dining-room. Tom, though he was a little afraid of Phil's doing too much, was delighted to astonish Fanny with the news of his brother's performances. In the exuberance of his spirits,

he indulged in a little teasing of his sister, and was just being chased out of the drawing-room by Fanny, dusting-brush in hand, when Stanton, in accordance with his promise to Philip, made his appearance at the front-door. As both of them were laughing, Stanton came to the conclusion that nothing very serious was the matter.

Tom dashed under the arm which Stanton had just raised to knock at the door, and vanished into the garden, while Fanny advanced to meet the visitor.

During Philip's illness, Stanton had seen Fanny in various aspects, and at almost all hours of the day; and though he had seen her once or twice under the influence of vexation towards himself, he had not for a moment discerned the evidence of any other motives than those which were dictated by genuine womanly feeling and affection.

Vanity and coquetry seemed, for the present at least, to be banished from her mind. She had been simply natural and engaging, and, though Stanton did not acknowledge to himself the force of these latter characteristics, she had always looked pretty and graceful; and what-



ever might be her circumstances or the occupations in which she was engaged, she seemed instinctively to do the thing that was most befitting.

Stanton thought, as she came forward, that she looked particularly winning in her elegant but perfectly neat and simple morning-dress. She conducted Stanton to the dining-room, where Philip was lying on the sofa.

‘Don’t get up, pray. I am afraid you are not very wise to be so venturesome,’ said Stanton.

‘Wise? I should think not!’ exclaimed Fanny. ‘I hope you will scold Philip, Mr. Mansfield, though I don’t suppose it will be of any use, for he told me this morning that it was no good talking to him.’

‘Come, Fanny! Don’t be cross; it is too bad when I am just come down.’

‘You should have stayed up, then,’ she replied, as she reached the wine and biscuits from the sideboard for him.

‘You must save your scolding till he is better, Miss Lyndon,’ suggested Stanton.

‘He won’t care for it then,’ replied Fanny.

‘So much the better,’ interposed Philip,

laughing ; 'and if I get off altogether, it won't matter, as it will do me no good.'

'You really are incorrigible, Philip. It is no use caring what becomes of you,' declared Fanny, as she left the room.

'It's all right, Stanton !' exclaimed Philip, almost before his sister had closed the door.

'I thought it would be, my dear fellow. I am very glad.'

'Stanton ! it has been like new life to me.'

Stanton looked at him. Though his cheek was pale and thin, and his figure shrunken, his eye was full of fire, and the light of a great hope was in his face. As their eyes met, Stanton read what was in Philip's thoughts. Both were silent for some time. Philip applied himself to the biscuits, which, in preoccupation, he had forgotten, until the feeling of exhaustion had reminded him of them.

'You don't look as strong as Hercules yet,' said Stanton, at length. 'Perhaps it will be as well if I take myself off, and leave you alone for a time ?'

'Don't go yet. There are some things that I must say. On one point, Stanton, I cannot count on your sympathy.'

‘I sympathise with you, I am sure,’ replied Stanton.

‘But you cannot approve—I must not hope for that at present; but the time might come, Stanton.’

Stanton was silent, and Philip did not like to press him.

‘Your cousin has not given me leave to hope,’ he resumed, after a pause. ‘I will be frank with you, for I do not wish to act in a dishonourable manner; but I feel that I cannot give up the attempt to win her favour, even though it be against your wishes.’

Stanton was still silent. What could he say? It was a most perplexing question, one to which he had in vain racked his brain to find an answer. He did not wish to treat Lyndon with harshness, but, on the other hand, the connection was one to which it was very difficult to bring himself to agree.

‘You must be aware, Lyndon,’ he said, at length, ‘that there are a great many difficulties.’

‘I know that only too well,’ was the reply. ‘I expect I have thought about them much more than you have. But whatever they are,

I feel that I must overcome them, if I can. I have no doubt,' he continued, 'that you would have wished for some one very different for your cousin, and it is possible that it might be for her happiness for things to remain as they are, and, I suppose, I ought to be capable of the self-sacrifice which would enable me to give her up. In that case, however, I should be noble enough to be fit to mate with her. But I cannot do it, Stanton. When I think of the past,' he added, after a pause, 'I wonder how I could have dared to touch her hand, much more speak to her of love; and yet my very self-abasement gave me courage, for I felt that she could do for me what no one else could. Stanton, it seems rather hard that the past should for ever rise up against me, and that no repentance, however bitter, should avail me. Put yourself in my place, Stanton, and try to realise what you would feel!'

Stanton felt that it would be cruel, after all Lyndon had suffered, to persist in repudiating his repentance. He feared, also, that discouragement would not act as a preventive with him in regard to Blanche.

As he noted the deep feeling with which

Lyndon spoke, and listened to his pleading tones, and met the earnest glance of his eyes, he felt how difficult it would be for Blanche to resist his wooing—even were she less inclined than Stanton feared.

‘I don’t know,’ he answered. ‘I must have time to think about it.’

‘Of course, I could not expect to be married yet,’ said Lyndon. ‘It will be a long time before I shall be able to give my father a separate maintenance, and pay off the old debts; I dare say that you will be as well pleased that it is so, and it will give me time to mould myself, as well as I can, to Blanche’s will. I have not had a fair chance of trying, with having had so much trouble.’

Stanton could not help being touched with this view of the case, and the earnestness with which it was put forward.

‘We must not forget,’ Lyndon continued, ‘that there is George in the background.’

‘Oh, we must manage him somehow. Besides, I don’t see how he could bring it forward, considering the share he has had in it.’

‘He means to cloak that somehow, and

smooth it down until there seems to be nothing left,' replied Philip.

'I don't see how he could do that.'

'Nor I either; but I am not a lawyer. If he had kept Mrs. Gordon on his side, he could have done a good deal, but now she has failed him. I should like to be sure that he will do nothing, Stanton. I don't know, even now, when I shall feel safe; but I suppose I must wait patiently. I hope, Stanton, that you will not influence the others against me.'

'I shall not do that, Lyndon. You may rely on me. But, before you take any further step, my mother and cousin ought to know——'

'To know what?' asked Lyndon, as Stanton hesitated.

'Your history, Lyndon.'

Philip winced.

'I hoped that it would be enough if you knew,' he said.

Stanton shook his head.

'I cannot undertake the responsibility of that,' he said.

Both were silent for some time. And then Philip said :

‘Well, if it must be, it must be ; but I think I had better go away for a week or two. I don’t know how I shall face either of them again.’

‘You have faced me,’ said Stanton.

‘Yes, but I told you voluntarily ; and besides, you have a kind of sympathy with me, which I have no right to expect from the others. They can neither of them measure my temptations, or realise what I have suffered. Mrs. Mansfield, with all her kindness, will, I am afraid, judge me severely ; and as to your cousin, I expect he will be quite inexorable.’

‘They will have to know, anyway. You must not expect to have no difficulties, Lyndon.’

‘God knows I do not expect that,’ replied Philip, in a low voice. ‘All I ask is that I may be allowed to look forward, Stanton. I will be content even if it be for a long time.’

‘It will be well for you not to say anything to Blanche until all this is settled, Lyndon,’ suggested Stanton.

‘If I have an opportunity, there is one thing I must say,’ replied Philip. ‘I have realised, during my illness, how wrong I have been in



urging her as I have done, and I must ask her forgiveness for that.'

'If you confine yourself to that, it will not matter,' said Stanton. 'Though I should not like to stake much upon the chance of your saying nothing else,' he thought.

'I can make no rash promises,' said Lyndon. 'But I may not have an opportunity for a long time. When do you wish to tell your mother and cousin?'

'Oh! I don't mind how long we wait, if you don't.'

'We had better get it over before your brother George comes home. When do you expect him?'

'I don't know exactly. In a few weeks, I suppose.'

'We had better not wait. I have had enough suspense, and I am weary of it. I don't know how I shall get on with George.'

'It will be very awkward for you,' said Stanton, kindly. 'But you must be as patient with him as you can.'

'I shall do if he lets me alone. I have hated him, Stanton, when he has baited me; but I feel that I have sinned too deeply to cast

a stone at him. If I had been like you, Stanton, I should have passed scatheless through the fire that scorched me. It was the evil in my own heart which gave both George and Mrs. Gordon power over me. Oh, Stanton! how often I have envied you in the calm peacefulness of a quiet conscience, when I have been stung with remorse, and tossing on a ceaseless ocean of unrest. When I think of these things, Stanton, I cannot help feeling very bitter against my father. He gave me his own evil passions; he sowed the seed and cherished it. In my boyhood he visited every trifling offence as if it had been a crime. I have been hard enough on Tom, but my treatment of him has been but a faint reflection of what I endured from my father, which roused passions in my nature that made it at one time seem little better than a hell. My mother died before I was as old as Tom, so that I lost the comfort of her sympathy. Her pure influence was almost lost in my father's tainted presence, though the remembrance of her affection restrained me from much into which otherwise I should have been drawn. I have tried to save Tom from some of the evils from which I suf-

ferred, though I might have done for him much more than I have.'

'From what you have told me, I can see how the present state of things has arisen. It has indeed been very unfortunate for you. All you can do now is to follow the right path resolutely. That, in itself, will bring a blessing in the peace of mind which you have so long missed, whatever your outward lot may be.'

'Thank you for those words, Stanton,' said Philip, with emotion. 'I am afraid that I shall tax the forbearance and the sympathy of my friends, for some time, more than I ought to do ; but I must look forward to better things in the future.'

'I really must go, Lyndon. You look quite done up,' said Stanton.

'I am not very strong yet ; and all this uncertainty is rather trying. I shall have to trust to you, Stanton, to give me a helping hand where I am quite powerless.'

'Well, my dear fellow, I will do what I can for you,' said Stanton, as he shook hands heartily.

Philip lay still with a delightful feeling of peace and restfulness, that was almost like a

new sensation to him. To be really free of George, and secure of Stanton's sympathy, would quite alter the tenor of his life. If only he could feel sure of hope in another direction, he felt that he should be as happy as, with the shadow from the past over him, he could possibly expect to be.

He was lying in a dreamy state in which his mind was too inactive to discuss the perplexities of the situation, the pleasant impression left by Stanton's visit being still upon him, when he was roused by a tap at the door, and Jane announced that Mr. Ainslie had called and asked if Mr. Philip were well enough to see him. Philip would at that moment have preferred being quiet; but, as he had just seen Stanton, it would hardly do to refuse to see the curate, who was accordingly shown in.

The thought entered Philip's head, that possibly the visit of the Rev. Reginald might be partly due to a desire to read him an appropriate lecture, now that, owing to his illness, he might be supposed to be in a softened mood.

This was, of all things, what Philip dreaded, and what he had no intention of submitting to

even from Blanche's brother. The best way of avoiding it, would be, he thought, to steer clear, if possible, of all subjects which would be likely to lead to such a catastrophe.

Philip knew that it was rather a difficult thing to baffle the curate, who had a clever way of edging round towards any subject that he wished to approach; and who, if that course did not answer, plunged boldly into the matter without the slightest hesitation.

Philip was agreeably surprised by the kindness with which Ainslie referred to his 'unfortunate accident,' as he termed it; expressing his pleasure at the invalid's recovery, and cautioning him not to be too rash in exerting himself before he was fit for it; adding that he had not the slightest expectation of seeing him down.

Philip, in return, hoped that the change had restored the curate's health, and dilated upon his own wish to visit the Lakes, of whose beauty he had heard so much.

Reginald then inquired after Mr. Lyndon, asking if he were soon expected back.

'I really don't know,' replied Philip. 'As we did not know where he was until I was getting

better, we thought that he need not hurry home, especially as he was not very well.'

'It must have been a great shock to him to hear of your illness,' observed the curate.

'I forget what he said about it, to tell the truth. I expect Fanny did not make the most of it.'

'There is clearly a great want of feeling, either in the father or in the son, or perhaps in both,' thought Reginald, who was struck with the tone of indifference in which Philip spoke.

'I hope that Miss Ainslie has returned well?' said Lyndon.

'She is looking better than she has done for some time,' replied Reginald. 'Though she was not very well two or three weeks since.'

'Two or three weeks since,' thought Philip. 'Was it possible that the news of his illness had affected her?'

'I hope, Mr. Lyndon,' continued the curate, 'that, as God has so mercifully raised you up from the very brink of the grave, you will devote the remainder of your life to His service?'

‘It is my intention, Mr. Ainslie,’ replied Philip, a little stiffly, ‘to make my future better than my past has been ; but I must do it in my own fashion, and I cannot go out of my way to prove it.’

‘That must lie between the individual conscience and its Maker,’ said Reginald. ‘He has bestowed on each of us a different gift, and if that is faithfully held, and rendered back to Him at the appointed time, He will not despise it.’

There was a slight but rather awkward pause. Philip devoutly hoped that Ainslie would say no more. He did not wish to appear to be in haste to change the subject himself. As, however, his visitor’s next remark was upon the beauty of the weather, Philip observed, with a lightened heart :

‘I hope, Mr. Ainslie, that you will have no more adventures in the haystack quarter of the town.’

‘Oh, I expect not,’ was the reply. ‘I called at the house of one of the youths before I left, and his mother seemed very sorry about it. While we were talking, the youth himself fortunately came in, and he made a kind of



uncouth apology. I told him that what I wanted was a change in that which had led to the act. Well, we had a little talk together, and the end of it was that he agreed to take the pledge.'

'That is better than might have been expected,' replied Lyndon. 'I trust that you will be able to do him some good.'

'I have great hopes of him,' answered the curate. 'He is much better than the other fellow, and had been led astray by bad company. I had had my eye on that youth for some time. It was worth while to be knocked down, if it has proved to be the means of leading him into the right path.'

'You had better get knocked down again,' suggested Philip, 'and perhaps that might do for the other fellow.'

'I am afraid not,' said the curate, shaking his head.

At this moment the door opened suddenly, and Tom came bounding in, singing at each leap two or three words of the lines, 'And 'twas there—that An—nie Laurie—gie'd me——' when, catching sight of the curate, he came to a dead stop.

‘Good-morning, Master Tom. What did she give you?’ asked Reginald, smiling.

‘She didn’t give *me* nothing,’ was on the tip of Tom’s tongue; but the curate was looking him full in the face, and his brother’s eye was also upon him; so he contented himself with saying the word ‘nothing’ alone with becoming gravity.

‘I came to ask you, Phil,’ he said to his brother— ‘to tell you, I mean, that Mrs. Carrington has sent you some soup; and she wants to know if you will have some now?’

‘Mrs. Carrington does?’

‘No; Janet.’

‘I’ll have some presently. I hope you sent my compliments?’

‘Janet sent something or other, I did not hear what. And they wanted to know how you were, and she asked Jones.’

‘I did not know that Mrs. Carrington was at the Hall,’ observed the curate.

‘No more she ain’t,’ replied Tom; ‘but she tells the housekeeper to send things, I s’pose, and so she does.’

The curate took his leave with a friendly

shake of the hand, and a hope that Philip would be better the next time he saw him.

Tom accompanied Reginald to the door, and then, returning to his brother, asked whether he would have the soup; and on receiving a nod for answer, he rushed off to fetch it.

‘I should not wonder if that sent him away,’ thought Tom, as he jumped along the passage. ‘Capital idea of mine; only, to be sure, I did not think of it.’

He soon returned, carrying the soup-plate very carefully in both hands.

‘Mind what you are about, and don’t send it all over me,’ said Philip, as Tom, exhausted by his efforts, set the plate down with a jerk.

‘It’s all right,’ replied Tom. ‘Why, Phil, you look worser than you did yesterday. You are as pale as—as—’ he was going to say ‘Miss Blanche,’ but he said ‘as a ghost’ instead.

‘Phil, if I had been you,’ he continued, ‘I should have stayed in bed a day longer, at any rate; because, you know, *she* is not likely to come, as she was here yesterday.’

‘Be quiet, Tom!’

‘Oh, I am going. ‘Poor Phil!’ he added

soothingly ; 'he's quite done up. Such exciting company has been too much for him.'

'I shall be quiet for a while when you are gone,' said Philip ; 'and tell them I will see no one else to-day. I have had enough.'

'Not even Mr. Wood—or Dr. Morton—or the rector—but he called yesterday, so he'll be sure not to come to-day. I'll tell 'em you'll see no one, not even——' the end of the sentence was lost in the closing of the door, which opened again in about two minutes.

'Do you want any salt or anything, Phil ?'

'No !' a little sharply.

In about a minute and a half the door again opened.

'Oh, I forgot to say that Jones wants to see you, either now or in an hour or two.'

'Not now, tiresome boy ! Be off with you, and don't come back.'

'You must not go in. He don't want to see nobody,' cried Tom, on meeting Fanny just outside the door. 'He's been bothered with the curate.'

'Are you sure he does not want anything ?'

'No, he don't. He's got some soup, and

he don't want nothing else, 'cos I 'axed him ; and if anybody calls he won't see 'em,' shouted Tom at the top of his voice, thus securing the double advantage of being heard by Fanny as she ran upstairs, and by Jane, who was coming along the passage.

## CHAPTER IV.

## BLANCHE'S STATEMENT.

'For in her heart  
She loved but him alone.'

THE NUT-BROWN MAID.

STANTON returned from the Bank in the soft sunshine of the May afternoon, and as he passed through the garden he saw Blanche in one of the side-walks. She did not see him as he stepped across the grass. She was singing softly to herself; there was a delicate bloom on her cheek, and a happy, dreamy look in her eyes, which Stanton noted with surprise. She listened with evident interest to her cousin's account of Philip, and then there was a pause.

‘Blanche,’ said Stanton, presently, ‘now that Lyndon is getting better, he will be sure to take an opportunity of speaking to you. If you are at all inclined to favour him, there is one thing I must mention.’

‘What is that?’ she asked, a little fearful of what was coming.

‘I said that he had told me something of his past history,’ continued Stanton; ‘and before any definite understanding is come to, my mother and Reginald ought to know, and you too, Blanche.’

‘I do know,’ she said, in a low tone.

‘I don’t think that you know all, Blanche.’

‘I think I do,’ she replied.

‘What did he tell you?’ asked Stanton. ‘About the death of an officer? and about—about a lady?’

‘Yes,’ answered Blanche, in so low a tone that Stanton could scarcely hear it.

‘When did he tell you this?’

‘You remember that evening when I nearly fainted?’

‘When Reginald was ill? Yes.’

‘He had just told me.’

‘Where was he, then? I did not meet him.’



‘No. He walked out of the window.’

‘He did? The rascal!’

‘Yes; and broke the rose-tree of whose destruction poor Tom was accused. Mr. Lyndon seemed as if he must tell me, Stanton.’

‘Well, that was honest of him, at any rate, though he did it in rather a queer way, it seems.’

‘He was obliged to take an opportunity when he could find one,’ said Blanche.

‘And in spite of all this, you can take this man for better and for worse, Blanche?’

‘Yes, Stanton,’ she replied, in sweet, clear tones. ‘He has sinned, but he has also suffered terribly, and his repentance has been deep and true. He looks to me to aid him in his strivings after the better life, Stanton. I cannot say him nay.’

‘Remember, Blanche,’ said her cousin, ‘that he cannot put off his fiery nature, even for love of you. Have you thought of his stubborn self-will, his stormy temper, his habits of mind and of life—so different from what you have been used to?’

‘I have thought of everything, Stanton. I have counted the cost, and I have made up my

mind. My lot, henceforth, is bound up with his, and nothing now can separate us.'

Blanche turned away, but not before her cousin had seen the deep feeling in her eyes and the glow upon her cheek.

'Then you are willing to marry him, Blanche?'

'I hope my friends will give their consent before that comes to pass,' she answered; 'but he has not said anything about that,' she added.

'It's a wonder, I am sure. He has impudence enough for anything.'

'Now, Stanton,' said Blanche, 'holding up her hand. 'I shall have to serve you as he serves Tom, if you talk in that way.'

'H'm. You are beginning to take pattern by him already. I thought it was to be the other way, Blanche.'

'It will be both ways, I expect,' was her answer.

'It strikes me that you'll have to gag Reginald,' said Stanton.

'I shall not advocate the adoption of such extreme measures at present,' replied Blanche, smiling.

‘There is one thing more, perhaps, that you ought to know,’ resumed Stanton, gravely. ‘It is something about Lyndon’s illness.’

As Blanche raised her eyes to his face, Stanton saw that she had no suspicion. It seemed almost a pity to tell her, and yet he thought that she ought to know. He bent down and whispered something in her ear. She uttered an exclamation of horror, her face becoming deadly pale.

‘Is that true, Stanton? Oh, tell me that it is not.’

‘It is true,’ answered her cousin. ‘Tom told me, and he mentioned it himself.’

‘Poor Philip!’ she murmured, in a tone of deep tenderness and pity.

Stanton, in a few brief words, explained how it had happened, and how the mistake had been discovered.

‘Oh, Stanton!’ she cried, ‘I hope that the devotion of my whole life will make him happy.’

‘If he is not happy with your love, Blanche, all I can say is that he does not deserve to be. But here is my mother coming to look after us.’

‘What is Blanche running away for?’ asked

Mrs. Mansfield, as her niece glided along one of the side-walks towards the house.

‘Why, she has taken the bit between her teeth, so now we must expect her to run away,’ answered Stanton ; and he proceeded to give her an account of what had passed. He was just debating whether or not he should relate to her the substance of what Lyndon had told him, when the dressing-bell rang, and he deferred it until another time.

## CHAPTER V.

## AT LAST.

‘ So well he woo’d her, and so well he wrought her  
With fair entreatie and sweet blandishment,  
That at the length unto a bay he brought her,  
So as she to his speeches was content  
To lend an ear, and softly to relent.  
At last, through many vows which forth he poured,  
And many oathes, she yielded her consent  
To be his love, and take him for her lord,  
Till they with marriage meet might finish that accord.’

SPENSER.

ONE bright, fresh morning, as Fanny, on returning from doing an errand, was tripping up the Walks, she met Blanche, who was just coming out of her aunt’s. The friends exchanged greetings, and Blanche inquired after Philip.

‘ He is very much better,’ replied Fanny ;

and he is going for a drive with Tom—at least, he is gone by this time, I expect, for they were putting the horse in as I came out.’

‘He must be better if he is able to drive either of those horses. I should find it rather hard work.’

‘Tom is going to drive,’ said Fanny.

‘Can he manage?’

‘I expect so, with Philip at his side. Tom is almost crazy about it. I left him standing on his head on the sofa, with his feet against one of the pictures. Fortunately he had only his slippers on, though he had not them on at that moment, for he had kicked them off in his delight; but, if he had had his boots on, it would have been all the same.’

Blanche could not help smiling at the picture that Fanny’s words presented.

‘It seems a shame to be in such a glorious morning,’ observed Fanny as they reached the house. ‘Can you come round the Walks with me, and we will call at the draper’s as we return? I want to have the benefit of your taste. Will you come in for a minute while I get the patterns and speak to Jane.’

Blanche said that she would wait in the

garden. Fanny hurried into the house, but she had not been there a minute when some callers came.

As Blanche walked round the garden, she encountered Tom.

‘ Oh, Miss Ainslie ! such a *turble* misfortune ! ’ he said.

Blanche, however, did not feel much alarmed, for the expression of Tom’s face was one of mingled comicality and lugubriousness.

‘ What is the matter, Tom ? ’ she asked.

‘ Why, I was going to drive out Phil, and the horse’s shoe came off.’

‘ Can’t it be put on again ? ’

‘ They’ve *tooked* it to the smith ; but he’ll be a month over it.’

Blanche smiled ; and she was just going to offer some consolation which she thought suitable to the gravity of the occasion, when Tom seemed to be seized by a sudden inspiration, for he rushed off like a shot, and dashed in at the front door.

‘ Oh, Phil ! ’ he cried, bounding into the dining-room, ‘ *She’s* in the garden ! ’

Philip started up as if he had received an electric shock.



‘Be steady, Phil, or you’ll frighten her. There she is. Look, near the arbour.’

Philip went out, and Tom stationed himself on the stairs, that he might intercept Fanny if the Hansons should go in any reasonable time.

Mrs. Hanson, however, was one of those persons who, when they are fairly launched in talk, never know when to come to a conclusion. Tom began to soothe his impatience by drumming with his hands on the polished part of the stair on each side of him, and with his feet on one lower down. When that became intolerably monotonous, which was very soon the case, he began racing up and down on all fours. That lasted some time, and when it failed, the balusters offered a variety of resources. He slid down the rail from the top, turning the corners with great dexterity, sometimes varying the process by dropping down outside when he reached the lowest flight, and then climbing up again.

Philip slackened his pace as he came near Blanche, who was sitting in the arbour. She rose when she saw him, and held out her hand with a throbbing heart and a glowing cheek.

‘I am glad you are better,’ she managed to say.

He gave one look at her face. It was enough. The next moment he was sitting beside her, with his arm round her.

‘Oh, Blanche! Thank God for this!’ he cried, in a broken voice.

She felt his passionate kisses on her cheek, and how wildly his heart was beating against hers.

‘Blanche, can you love me?’

‘Yes, Philip,’ she replied.

They sat for some minutes in a delicious silence. It was the first sweet communion of love.

‘Will you trust me, Blanche?’

‘I do trust you, Philip, now and for ever.’

‘Oh, love!’ he said, ‘this will be a holy baptism to me. Your love must make me pure. My sin will die away in its sweet light.’

‘Philip, we must help each other. You must strengthen me, for I am weak.’

‘You are strong in purity and truth, love. It is I who am weak; but your love will make me strong. I almost promised Stanton,’ he said, after some time had passed, ‘not to come to an understanding with you at present.’

‘And I quite promised my aunt,’ replied Blanche.

‘Well, you must throw the blame on me,’ he said. ‘I suppose we must not settle any more without permission from the “higher powers.”’

‘And I must be going. What a long time Fanny is! I wonder whether her visitors have gone?’

‘Need you be in such a hurry?’ he asked.

‘I promised Reginald that I would not be long. I must go.’

One more folding of the arms round Blanche’s figure, and a few sweet kisses on cheek and brow, and then they rose.

‘Shall I say that you must go, love?’ he asked.

‘If you please.’

‘Wait for me a minute.’ And off he went towards the house.

Tom was just sliding down the rail for the twentieth time.

‘Will you tell Fanny that Miss Ainslie is going home. She cannot wait any longer.’

‘All right,’ cried Tom, picking himself up just in time to see his brother’s happy face as he turned to go out again.

‘Aren’t you going a drive?’ cried Tom, rushing to the door.

‘Yes, presently,’ said Philip.

Blanche was going slowly towards the gate, evidently waiting for him.

Philip felt, as he walked by Blanche’s side, as if he must be dreaming. She read his thought in his face, and her smile reassured him.

They had to pass Mrs. Mansfield’s on their way to the Terrace. Harry was in the garden. He waved his cap, and rushed out to ask Philip to come in and rest.

‘No, thank you,’ was his reply. ‘I am not going far; but if you have a mind to be very good-natured, you may run and tell Tom to meet me with the dog-cart at the bridge, and that will save me from having to walk back again.’

Harry rushed off on his errand, and found Tom seeing the horse put in, as it had just returned from being shod.

Philip and Blanche passed on until they reached the place where they had first met.

‘Blanche,’ he said, ‘this will always be holy ground to me. As soon as I saw you, I felt

what you would be to me ; but I dared not look forward to the time when we should pass this spot together, one in heart and soul.'

They went on in silence for a few minutes.

'Look, Philip,' said Blanche ; 'you have not seen the Chestnut Walk in its beauty.'

It was, indeed, a lovely scene. The green vista, lessening in the distance, with the brown tree-trunks on either hand. Above their heads was a canopy of tender, crumpled leaves, lighted up with a glory of radiant, golden green, and mingled with innumerable cones of wax-like flowers. The broken rays of sunshine played, chequering the path beneath their feet in an ever-varying dance of flickering light.

'Surely, Blanche,' said Philip, 'this is one of nature's temples, where the spirit may rise to heaven in thankfulness and prayer !'

Blanche's heart swelled with an emotion that was too deep for words.

'Blanche,' said Philip, as they reached the Terrace, 'the sweet fragrance of this day will remain ever with me, whatever my fate may be.'

She answered him by a look which told of the pure happiness that filled her heart, and then

tripped in at the garden-gate, while Philip passed on to the place where the dog-cart was waiting with Tom and the groom, who would not leave the horse until his master appeared.

For a few minutes after they set off, Tom's attention was wholly absorbed by the horse, which at first seemed inclined to take advantage of his young master by indulging in sundry frisks and capers. A few judicious words of advice from Philip, bestowed alternately on the horse and on Master Tom, induced the former to settle down into a steady pace, and gave the latter an opportunity of acquiring some information in which he was interested.

‘Is it all right, Phil?’ he asked.

‘Yes, my dear Tom.’

‘Hurrah! I thought it was,’ cried Tom, flourishing his whip.

‘Mind what you are about, or you’ll tip us over; and that won’t be all right.’

‘Are you going to be married?’

‘Not at present.’

‘You are engaged, then, I suppose?’

‘Well, not exactly. There is something to be settled first.’

‘Oh, well, it’s all the same, I suppose. Why,

she'll be my sister! Won't that be jolly! You'll let me live with you, Phil, won't you?

'We shall see. There is nothing settled yet.'

'I will be *such* a good boy!'

'You had better begin to practise at once, then.'

'So I will!' cried Tom, giving the reins a jerk which brought the horse on his hind legs.

'Be steady, now!' said Philip, in a warning voice, to both the frisky young creatures under his care.

'You must not tell any one, Tom, till it is all settled,' he resumed, as soon as the horse was quiet again.

'All right,' replied Tom; 'I won't say anything till you say I may. But I may tell Harry, though?' he asked.

'It is hard work to keep a secret from him, I suppose?'

'Well, I tell him everything—almost, at least.'

Philip knew what the 'almost' meant.

'If he keeps one secret, it is as much as I can expect,' he thought.

'Now turn down that lane, and see if you



can steer clear of the post at the corner. The road is rather narrow farther on, and does not leave much room for vagaries ; so you had better mind.'

'Oh, I'll be extra steady,' replied Tom ; and he devoted his whole attention to the matter in hand. With the help of the 'extra' steadiness the post was cleared, and the succeeding dangers safely passed.

Philip enjoyed his drive very much. The air was fresh and balmy ; the trees were clothed in their tenderest tints of green ; every bank was gay with the blue-bell or the star-like stellaria ; and the birds were carolling merrily among the branches. Everything, in Philip's eyes, was radiant with the light of love. There seemed to be a brighter glory over earth and sky, a deeper and a holier meaning in every sight and sound of nature.

They met Stanton as they passed up the street on their return. Tom reined up the horse willingly enough at his brother's request.

'Can you come in for half-an-hour to-night?' asked Philip. 'I wish to speak to you.'

'Oh, certainly. I'll not forget.'

'Was it not provoking,' said Fanny to her

brother, when he went in, 'of that old Mrs. Hanson to come and stay so long, just as I was going out with Blanche?'

'You should have told her that you were engaged. I should have done.'

'I did not wish to seem rude; and she is very easily offended.'

'Well, I suppose you can have your walk another day.'

'But I can very seldom get hold of Blanche, for I do not go there much.'

'For fear of getting into a flirtation with the Reverend Reginald?' asked Philip, roguishly.

'And Blanche won't come here if she can help it,' continued Fanny, 'because you always tease her, Philip.'

'I'll promise not to tease her any more,' said Philip, laughing. 'You may tell her so, Fanny.'

'You had better tell her yourself, Philip.'

'So I will, on the very first opportunity.'

## CHAPTER VI.

## MRS. MANSFIELD'S JUDGMENT.

‘The world will not believe a man repents ;  
And this wise world of ours is mainly right.  
Full seldom *does* a man repent, or use  
Both grace and will to pick the vicious quitch  
Of blood and custom wholly out of him,  
And make him clean, and plant himself afresh.’

TENNYSON.

PHILIP being engaged with some one in the consulting-room when Stanton came, he was shown into the drawing-room. Fanny was at the piano, and on Stanton begging her to go on singing, she complied with his request.

Tom, who had seated himself in one of the easy-chairs, proceeded to try to prepare the visitor's mind for the communication which he judged was coming by a series of pantomimes,

which were intended to indicate Philip in the consulting-room, and Blanche at Victoria Terrace, and the garden as the scene of the incident; while he puckered up his mouth to a shape which he meant to represent a kiss, as a revelation of what had taken place.

Stanton, however, was completely mystified by these various gesticulations, and he shook his head hopelessly, until Tom could bear it no longer, and he was reduced to giving relief to his feelings by standing on his head in the easy-chair, when, slipping on the smooth leather, his feet came down suddenly on his sister's work-basket. Fanny jumped up from the piano, startled by the clatter.

‘What *are* you doing, Tom?’ she cried.

‘I was trying to make Stanton understand something, and he wouldn’t,’ was the reply of Master Tom, who was on his knees on the floor, picking up the contents of the basket.

‘Mr. Stanton will have no difficulty in understanding what a troublesome monkey you are,’ said Fanny. ‘Put them in tidy, Tom.’

‘Oh my! What a lot of things, *to be sure!*’ observed Tom. ‘And there need be only scissors, and cotton, and needles, and a few

buttons. There !' he added, as he put the basket down with a jerk just before his sister, ' It's a deal neater than it was before, I can tell you ; so there's no harm done.' And he rushed off to the consulting-room door, and, giving a smart tap, he called out to Philip that there was some one wanted him in the drawing-room presently. Tom then set off post haste to Mrs. Mansfield's, where he found Harry alone in the drawing-room. The delights of the drive had first to be enlarged upon and sympathised with, and then Tom observed :

' Something else has happened at our house, to-day, Harry.'

' Indeed ! What sort of a thing ?'

' Oh, a jolly sort of thing. Phil and somebody you like, and I like too—she's going to be my sister.'

' Are they going to be married, then ?'

' No ; and they ain't engaged yet ; but something like it, you know. I can't describe it exactly. But you aren't to tell anybody.'

' Is nobody to know, then ?'

' Oh yes. He's telling Stanton now.'

' I don't think my cousin Reginald will agree,' said Harry.

‘Oh, but he must!’ was the reply. ‘Phil says that every one ought to do as he likes in such things. They won’t be married yet awhile, so he’ll have plenty of time to come round.’

‘Stanton says that long engagements are very bad things,’ answered Harry, sagely. ‘Why, I am sure I cannot tell.’

‘Well, I should think they are rather nice,’ answered Tom. ‘Every one gets married,’ he added, as if he thought that was a very commonplace proceeding.

‘Then I suppose she likes him,’ observed Harry, musingly.

‘I told you so, a long time ago,’ replied Tom, aiming with his head at a particular white rose in the centre of the sofa-cushion, which, being dislodged from its place by the violence of the attack, fell on the floor, followed by Tom. The door opened at this moment, and Mrs. Mansfield entered. Tom replaced the cushion on the sofa, and retreated to the fireplace, where he stood plaiting the fringe of the mantel-shelf.

‘Where is Stanton, Harry?’ asked Mrs. Mansfield.

‘He’s at our house,’ replied Tom, before

Harry could speak. 'Phil wanted him about something very particular.'

'I am glad to hear that your brother is so much better.'

'He has risen up like a Phoenix from his own ashes,' replied Tom.

'When is he going out?'

'He said at dinner, to-day, that he should not go; that, as he was so much better and just setting to work, it would be nonsense going out.'

'He would be the better for a change, I should think.'

'Oh, he must have one when he's——'

'When he is poorly again?' asked Mrs. Mansfield.

'No; I did not mean that,' replied Tom. 'But I was not to tell, if you don't mind.'

'Of course not, if it is a secret,' said Mrs. Mansfield, smiling, while Harry laughed.

As soon as Philip had dismissed his patient, he sent for his visitor to the consulting-room.

'I wished to see you, to tell you that I have seen your cousin,' said Philip, as Stanton sat down.



‘Then you have settled everything, I suppose?’

‘We have settled nothing, except to love each other for ever and a day.’

‘That is the principal part of the business, is it not?’

‘Well, I suppose it is.’

‘It would have been better if you had waited a little longer, Lyndon.’

‘I haven’t, you see; and I think that I have waited long enough.’

‘When are you going for your excursion?’

‘I do not intend to go at all, for I should be thinking of what you were doing all the time, and it would do me no good. Besides, the first meeting after I came back would be very awkward.’

‘There’s something in that,’ replied Stanton.  
‘How are we to manage, then?’

‘Oh, if they are to know, you had better tell them some day when there is a good opportunity; but it must not be long first, because they will have to know about my having seen Blanche. You must tell me when it is all over.’

‘Very well,’ said Stanton.

Philip stood at the window for some minutes with a throbbing heart. When would this dreadful shadow from the past have ceased to cast its darkness over him ?

Stanton felt how very trying the situation was for Lyndon ; but, on the other hand, he reflected how difficult it would be for his mother and his cousin to bring their minds to agree to such a connection.

‘ Stanton,’ said Philip, turning round, ‘ you must urge them, as soon as you think it advisable, to consent to an engagement. As long as that is withheld I shall not have a fair chance, for I shall feel restless and unsettled.’

‘ You were going to be satisfied with Blanche’s love at first,’ replied Stanton. Now you cannot do without being engaged ; and as soon as that is granted, you will want to be married.’

‘ No ; I shall be willing to wait for that.’

‘ Until you are engaged, at any rate.’

‘ Mansfield, you are too hard upon me,’ said Philip. ‘ I think that I can realise what are the feelings of your mother and your cousin better than you can mine. Loving Blanche as I do, and knowing that she returns my love, it will be

very awkward and uncomfortable if we have to depend upon chance meetings to see each other. I should like to be able to visit her in an open, straightforward manner. I have had enough of dodging about after her, all this time.'

Stanton could not forbear smiling.

'Well,' he said, 'we'll see what can be done.'

'And you need not be afraid of my saying anything about being married, if that is any comfort to you,' continued Philip; 'for I shall not be able to provide separately for my father for some time.'

'He does not seem to know that Blanche has money,' thought Stanton. 'However, I am not bound to tell him that now.—There need be no hurry about your being married, certainly,' he said aloud; 'and you must be prepared for some trouble and delay with regard to the engagement.'

'Well, Stanton, I will try to submit,' replied Philip, after a struggle. 'But I hope they will be as merciful to me as they can.'

As Stanton walked slowly home in the soft twilight, he met the two boys, arm-in-arm, evidently in deep consultation.

'Where are you off to?' he asked.

'We are only going "*up-along*," for the benefit of our health,' was Tom's reply, as he looked anxiously into his friend's face. 'I hope it will be all right, Stanton,' he added.

'Hope what will be right? Your health?'

'No; you know what I mean.'

'Yes; I know what you mean. Go for your walk, you monkey.'

'I am afraid they are all against him,' said Tom, shaking his head, as he and Harry walked on. 'I had thought better of Stanton,' he added indignantly.

'Stanton will do what is right,' replied Harry; 'but, you know, he could not very well go against my mother and my cousin Reginald.'

'If they are wrong he ought to,' said Tom, stoutly. 'I'd go against all the world for Phil.'

As soon as Stanton reached home, he went to the drawing-room, and taking a chair close to his mother's sofa, he gave her an account of his interview with Lyndon, and also of what that gentleman had told him of his past life. To say that Mrs. Mansfield was shocked would be to give but a faint idea of her feelings.

'Oh, Stanton!' she cried, 'I can never let him have my child.'

‘Poor Lyndon!’ thought Stanton.

‘A man stained with such a crime as that. Oh, Stanton, how could Blanche think of it!’

‘I cannot exactly tell,’ he replied. ‘There is no accounting for ladies’ fancies. Though this is more than a fancy on Blanche’s part.’

‘You said that George was mixed up with it,’ remarked Mrs. Mansfield, after a pause.

‘He is the man whom I have called G——,’ answered her son.

‘Stanton! impossible! That *cannot* be true.’

‘Lyndon has seemed perfectly straightforward in all that he has said,’ returned Stanton; ‘and the fact of George’s hatred of him, for I can call it nothing else, certainly gives colour to the story.’

There was a long silence, which was broken by Stanton:

‘Then I must tell Lyndon,’ he said, ‘that you utterly forbid Blanche’s entering into any engagement with him?’

‘I must have time to think. My ideas are all in confusion,’ replied his mother. ‘I must see Blanche in the morning, and hear what she says.’

‘I’ll run down and tell her to come up,’ said Stanton; and off he went.

It was with a beating heart, but with a quick step and an air of quiet determination, that Blanche tripped up the Walks the next morning.

Stanton was gone to the Bank, and Harry to the office, so that Mrs. Mansfield was alone. She was very pale, and appeared weary, as if from a sleepless night, and there was an unwonted expression of disquietude upon her countenance. She kissed her niece affectionately, and looked earnestly into her face.

Blanche returned her gaze without faltering. The bloom upon her cheek deepened considerably, but her clear grey eyes showed no sign of wavering or of fear.

‘Knowing what you do of Mr. Lyndon,’ said her aunt, ‘you would yet entrust your happiness to him, and link your fate with his?’

‘My happiness is bound up with his,’ was Blanche’s answer. ‘But that is not all. True love is a holy tie which cannot be denied without sin. It brings its duties as well as its pleasures, and perhaps its pains, and they must be fulfilled. He has loved and sought me long;

and now that I love him I dare not repel him. No one else, except perhaps Stanton, knows how he has suffered, and how he has repented—how he has struggled with difficulties and discouragement. I am bound to him by a tie which I cannot break. It is the hand of God that has brought us together, aunt.'

Mrs. Mansfield again kissed her niece's glowing cheek, and stroked her soft brown hair.

'My love, I am afraid that it is the heart, and not the head, which has inspired these arguments.'

'Both are in accord, aunt, in this matter. I should be sorry to be engaged to him against your will, but I cannot give him up.'

Mrs. Mansfield could not but be surprised at her niece's firmness. In anything connected with her own wishes, Blanche had usually been almost too yielding; she was apt to give way so readily, that it seemed as if she had no decided will of her own. Her aunt dwelt upon the various points that bore upon the subject in question: Philip's violent temper, his occasional roughness, his atheistical opinions, and the habits of mind and of life which had been produced by his unfavourable surroundings; but all



was in vain. Blanche combated her aunt's arguments when they admitted of an answer, and when they did not she was silent ; but she remained unshaken, and Mrs. Mansfield saw with some displeasure that her words were wasted.

‘And you expect to persuade Reginald to adopt your views?’ she said at last.

‘I have sought to do what was right, without reference to any other consideration,’ replied Blanche. ‘But I hope that he will come round in time.’

‘He had better be told of this at once, Blanche.’

‘I will ask him to come here to-night, and Stanton may tell him. It will be better to get it over.’

Blanche went to her visiting, wondering how her brother would receive the news. She feared that he would take a more severe view of the case than her aunt had done. He might even insist on her breaking off all intercourse with Philip. However, it would be better to know the worst, and then make up her mind what course to take.

Philip passed her in his dog-cart just as she

came out of a cottage, the groom driving this time instead of Tom. Philip was looking very grave, but the light came over his face as soon as he saw her.

‘And aunt,’ she thought, as she passed on up the street, ‘would have me take from him all his joy, and his hopes of happiness and peace.’

## CHAPTER VII.

## REGINALD'S JUDGMENT.

‘The fall thou darest to despise,  
May be the angel's slackened hand  
Has suffered it, that he may rise  
And take a firmer, surer stand.’

A. A. PROCTOR.

‘I WONDER what Stanton wants me about?’ said Reginald. ‘He knows that I am always busy on Saturday evening. Did he say what it was, Blanche?’

‘I saw no one but aunt this morning,’ she replied. ‘Stanton was gone to the Bank, I suppose.’

‘Well, I think he might have come here, instead of expecting me to go to him. I dare say that it is nothing very important that he wants to say.’

Blanche thought that it was rather important, though she kept her opinion to herself.

‘Well, I suppose I had better go before I set to work again at my sermon,’ observed Reginald, as he rose from the dinner-table, ‘and then I can go on afterwards without interruption. Are you inclined to go up with me, Blanche?’

‘No, thank you. As I saw aunt this morning, I don’t think that I need go again.’

‘I dare say she would be glad to see you again; and it is very pleasant out.’

‘I would rather not, to-night,’ replied Blanche.

Stanton had not left the dining-room when Reginald arrived.

‘Take a glass of wine, Reginald, before we begin,’ he said, as the curate sat down.

‘No, thank you. I hope that what you have to say will not take long, for Saturday night is rather a busy time with me.’

‘I quite forgot that it was Saturday night. However, Blanche made the appointment; I did not.’

‘Why, she said that you wished to speak to me about something,’ said Reginald, in some surprise.

‘Well, so I do. But she fixed the time.’

‘It was very thoughtless of her,’ observed her brother.

‘What I have to say will take some time,’ said Stanton. ‘Had we not better defer it until Monday?’

‘As I have come on purpose, it seems hardly worth while. But be as brief as you can, Stanton.’

‘Well, I wished to speak with you about Lyndon.’

‘Lyndon, eh?’ said Reginald, pricking up his ears. ‘What of him?’

‘It seems that he and Blanche have come to an understanding.’

‘Lord bless me! You don’t say that!’ exclaimed the curate.

Stanton plunged at once into the matter. He told Reginald what Philip had said about his interview with Blanche; and then gave the sad history of his past life, omitting no detail which Lyndon had given; concluding with the picture of his early home, and his account of his penitence and of his misery.

Reginald listened attentively, interrupting the narrative occasionally by an exclamation of

horror at the account of Philip's sins, of indignation at his father's treatment of him, or of pity for him in his repentance and remorse.

'Well,' he observed, as his cousin concluded, 'this is indeed a sad story, and I am very sorry for Mr. Lyndon—very sorry indeed. But I wish that he had not fallen in love with Blanche.'

'Yet, as he has done so, we must take it into consideration,' said Stanton; 'and it seems, according to his account, to have been the principal means of the alteration in him.'

'It certainly appears that before he was blindly groping in the dark,' replied the curate, 'and that then the light broke in upon his soul; and thus to the agonies of remorse was added the striving of the awakened conscience, which is the prelude to a true repentance. It is certain,' he added, 'that affection for a worthy object may sometimes be the means by which the grace of God may be appointed to work out the regeneration of a sinner.'

'Still, as you say,' observed Stanton, 'it would have been as well if it had been some one else rather than Blanche.'

'Looking at it from a purely human point of

view, it certainly would,' replied Reginald ; 'but in the eye of Heaven my sister is, of course, of no more account than another, and we ought not to murmur. However, I must talk to Blanche, and ascertain whether she is acting from deliberate conviction rather than from the impulse of the moment.'

'I am pretty sure on that point,' remarked Stanton.

'Lyndon's sin, in the first instance,' observed Reginald, 'was one into which a young man, in such circumstances, was sure to fall ; not that the sin itself is any the less for that, though it certainly makes a difference as to the degree of moral responsibility in the individual. The second sin, the first having been committed, was one which followed naturally, as one may say, in the circumstances, from the jealousy and the treachery of G——, who, by the way, appears to me to have been much the worst of the two. As to the death of the captain, I think that ninety-nine out of a hundred would have done as Lyndon did. It was an act of self-defence which, had it occurred on the occasion of a man breaking into a house, or of an attack on the high-road, would not be thought much of. I

don't mean to speak lightly of the sin, you must understand; but it was the previous condition of things that lent additional horror to the catastrophe. I think one ought, Stanton, in such a case as this, to look at it in all its bearings. Most young men, after such terrible occurrences, would have plunged still deeper in a vicious course, which, according to your account, Lyndon does not seem to have done; and the determined struggles which he appears to have made show him to be possessed of nobler qualities than, all things considered, might have been expected.'

'I am glad that you take such a lenient view of the case,' observed Stanton, much relieved.

'If he had not had some nobleness of nature,' continued Reginald, 'the shock which the committal of the deed occasioned would, with such a temperament as his, have produced the effect which I have mentioned; in which case, humanly speaking, he would have been lost. As it is, it would be cruel and unjustifiable, not to say impious, to treat him with contempt. What are we that we should judge our fellow-mortals? I cannot say that I have ever liked



Lyndon, nor is it probable that I ever shall. He is not a man of my stamp; but on that account I ought to be the more careful not to treat him with injustice. You or I, Stanton, had we been brought up under unfavourable influences, might have deviated as far as he did from the path of virtue, though perhaps in a different direction. Well, I will see you to-morrow evening,' added the curate, 'and I will think it over in the meantime. I am afraid there is an end of my sermon. I shall never be able to collect my thoughts again to-night.'

'Oh, well, you must give them an old one,' said Stanton. 'If they practise what it says, some of them will be better than they are likely to be, I expect.'

Reginald walked home, with his mind so much absorbed in reflection on what he had just heard, that he passed Master Thomas Lyndon without recognising him. That young gentleman, whose thoughts were for once occupied with the same subject as that on which the curate was pondering, was walking along in such a sober fashion, that a keener observer than was Reginald might have been excused for thinking

that the person whom he met was not his young friend.

‘He’s making up his sermon, I s’pose,’ thought Tom. ‘He’d better preach about Christian love and all that, *I* think.’

Blanche glanced at her brother as he entered the drawing-room at No. 3, Victoria Terrace, with an expression on her countenance of anxiety, not unmingled with fear.

‘I have been very much surprised, Blanche,’ he said, sitting down close to her, ‘to hear that you have entered into a sort of engagement with Philip Lyndon.’

As his tone was not ungentle, Blanche’s courage revived.

‘After all that has happened, I felt that I was right in what I did,’ she said.

‘And you have such confidence in him as to justify your taking such a step?’

‘Yes, Reginald, I have,’ was her reply. ‘I believe he has fairly commenced the striving after a better life, and that he will not fail.’

‘From what Stanton tells me, I am inclined to be of the same opinion,’ replied her brother. ‘But you must not expect him to be perfect all at once, Blanche. There will be asperities of

temper, stubbornness of will, and ways of thinking, which have become, as it were, stereotyped in his nature, and which it will be next to impossible to change, or even much to modify.'

'I know that,' said Blanche. 'I think that I am perfectly aware of his faults, and I do not expect too much from him.'

'You may be aware of them,' answered her brother, 'and yet you may not recognise fully all that they involve. There is no doubt,' he continued, 'that married life, though it tends to ripen many virtues that would otherwise remain in an undeveloped state, also brings into prominence, in the close intimacy of its relations, many failings which, from a more distant point of view, would appear to be comparatively unimportant.'

'I think I am prepared, Reginald, for any such trials—at least, I hope so.'

'Trials, of course, we must have,' observed the curate, 'and they must be borne with fortitude, but it is not well to rush into troubles for which we are unprepared ; and a great deal depends, Blanche, upon whether you have well considered this matter.'

'I have, Reginald,' said she ; 'I have consi-

dered it long. At first I was afraid ; I felt that I was not strong enough to undertake the responsibility ; but now I have no fear. I can trust him perfectly, and I know that he will be true.'

'Well, Blanche, you are a child no longer. With God's help you are competent to form your own judgment, and to choose your own course in life. Far be it from me to wish to control you unjustly in this matter. Lyndon is not the man I should have chosen for you ; but such things are not, happily, left altogether, to human guidance. From what Stanton says, I judge that the work of regeneration has commenced well in Lyndon's soul, and it is not for me to break the bruised reed, or to quench the smoking flax.'

'Dear Reginald,' said Blanche, her eyes glistening with tears of joy, 'I did not expect that you would be so kind.'

'Blanche,' answered her brother, reprovingly, 'when have I shown myself hard to the returning penitent ? I have been stern with regard to impenitent sin ; but when I have seen any indication of a change, I have not dared to strive with the workings of the grace of God,

or to limit what is possible to the Holy Spirit.'

'I hope, Reginald, that you will be able to overcome aunt's prejudices on the subject. I should be sorry to grieve her more than could be helped.'

'Well, my dear Blanche, I will try what I can do next week,' replied Reginald. 'It is unfortunate this has happened on Saturday evening. However, I must find an old sermon, and make that do to-morrow.' And he reached from the cupboard a pile of manuscripts carefully tied up, and written in a clear neat hand, each one marked with the date of its delivery.

Blanche sat with her busy fingers flying over her work, and her heart glowing with gratitude and hope. Some of the most serious obstacles to her formal engagement to Philip had melted away in a very unexpected manner; and she reflected with unalloyed delight upon the joyful surprise which it would be to Philip when he should hear the news.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### MORE LIGHT.

‘Waiting to be treated as a wolf  
Because my deeds were known, I found,  
Instead of scornful pity, or pure scorn,  
Fine reserve, and noble reticence.’

TENNYSON.

MRS. MANSFIELD was very much surprised when she heard her son’s account of the way in which Reginald had received the news of his sister’s affection for Philip and of the confession of the latter.

‘That is a man’s view of the case,’ she said. ‘Reginald thinks only of Mr. Philip, and not at all of what Blanche may have to suffer.’

‘Well, mother, we had better talk it over another time. I don’t think you are well enough now to be bothered with it.’

‘I cannot help thinking about it, though,’ was her reply.

The disturbance of feeling and the anxiety which had been caused by the news of the relations that existed between her niece and Lyndon, added to the shock which the discovery of George’s misconduct had given her, had brought on in Mrs. Mansfield a degree of prostration which made Stanton very uncomfortable. He proposed sending for Lyndon, but his mother was not willing. She did not wish to see Philip just then. Stanton stayed with her on the Sunday morning, but in the evening she begged that he and Harry would both go to church, as she should be better quiet; and accordingly they went. As they walked up to the church door, Stanton said to his brother :

‘I really think we had better have Lyndon to see my mother. He is just before us. Run on, Harry, and tell him I wish to speak to him.’

Harry darted on. Philip, however, had got inside the church door before Harry came up, so he clutched Tom, who was behind, by the back of his jacket, and gave the message, which Tom conveyed to its destination as soon as he had sat down in church.

‘Depend upon it,’ he thought, as he knelt down for the commencing prayer, ‘that they’ve been talking over Phil’s affairs, and that was what Ainslie had been about when I met him, for Blanche says he never goes out for anything, hardly, on Saturday night, and they want to tell Phil what they’ve settled.’

Under the enlivening inspiration of this thought, Tom, try as he would, could not sit still. He managed pretty well during the first part of the service, but when the sermon began his restlessness became unmanageable. First one foot, and then the other, would move; shoulders, hands, and elbows following suit, succeeded by wriggings and fidgetings innumerable. However, several well-directed nudges from Philip, and the occasional resolute pressure of that gentleman’s foot on the toes of Master Tom, had a wonderfully sedative effect on the latter, who became at length reduced to a proper degree of quietness.

Reginald read the lessons, and the sermon was preached by a guest of the rector’s. It was on the forgiveness of sin, and was a beautiful exposition of the parable of the Prodigal Son; showing that the repentance of the sinner is all



that is needed by the loving Father to enable Him to receive his erring child.

When Philip, with his sister at his side, and Tom close at his heels, met the Mansfields, his first glance was naturally at Blanche, who gave him a look so radiant with hope and love, that he could not help feeling that some, at any rate, of the difficulties which caused him so much anxiety must be disappearing.

Master Tom was considerably disappointed when he heard Stanton say, that his mother was so far from well that he wished Philip would walk round with them and see her.

‘Well,’ thought Tom, with intense disgust, ‘they might have waited till after church for *that*!’

The whole party walked on together, and when they arrived at Mrs. Mansfield’s, Blanche went to her aunt’s room, whither Philip was soon summoned.

He found Mrs. Mansfield in much the same state as he had often done before; he had no reason to suspect that her indisposition was produced by any particular cause, though he noticed that the expression of her countenance was scarcely so calm as usual. Used as he was to

the constant friction of undisciplined wills and tempers unsubdued, he did not give much heed to this fact, especially as his attention was distracted from his patient by the presence of Blanche.

He had no opportunity of any private conference with Blanche ; he did not, in the circumstances, expect it. She did not wish to seem to seek the chance for which she longed, and he respected her scruples with a patience which was born of the confidence with which he trusted in her love.

‘ I don’t know when I’ve been so much struck by a sermon as I have been to-night,’ observed Reginald to his cousin as soon as Philip was gone upstairs. ‘ It might have been written on purpose for me. It showed me how arrogant I have been in judging Lyndon, and how mistaken I have been in him. It was exactly suited to my case.’

‘ It was a pity that my mother did not hear it,’ said Stanton, ‘ as it has produced so good an effect on you.’

‘ Well, I must give it to her at second hand,’ replied Reginald. ‘ It is a good thing,’ he continued, ‘ that clergymen sometimes hear sermons

as well as preach them. The habit of addressing reproof and exhortation to others, without being ordinarily subject to it one's self, is not altogether good—to be always giving, and not receiving, so to say ; though of course one does receive, in one way, a good deal from intercourse with one's flock ; and spiritual help is always near to those who seek it. I questioned Blanche last night, Stanton,' he continued, 'with regard to her feelings towards Mr. Lyndon, and I have reason to believe that she has decided upon this step from no mere fancy of the moment, but from a firm conviction of what is right and fitting.'

'Then you give your approval to the engagement ?'

'I consent to it, at any rate. I should have been better pleased if her intended had been a different kind of man—more like your brother George, for instance, though he does not take that interest in spiritual things which I should like to see. However, it is useless to wish for what cannot be.'

Lyndon's entrance at this moment put a stop to the conversation. Stanton asked him to stay to supper, but he said that he thought he had

better go home and send Mrs. Mansfield's medicine.

'Ah! I forgot the medicine,' said Stanton. 'Well, I will walk with you, Lyndon, if Reginald will excuse me for a few minutes?'

'Oh, certainly,' replied the curate.

'Well, I've told,' said Stanton, as soon as they were outside the gate.

'You have?' exclaimed Lyndon.

'My mother will want a little bringing round,' continued Stanton, 'but Ainslie has not stood out at all.'

'You don't mean that!' cried Philip, almost breathlessly.

'I do indeed, my dear Lyndon.'

'I don't understand it, Stanton,' said Philip, in a bewildered tone.

'Well, to tell the truth, I was taken by surprise myself.'

'How was it?'

'He is very much impressed by the idea,' replied Stanton, 'that the change in you is a genuine one.'

'I am afraid he will expect too much of me.'

'I don't think that he will. He seemed to

realise fully your situation, and the difficulties with which you have to contend.'

'He is a Christian, if ever there was one!' said Philip, with emotion. 'I did not expect this, Stanton, and it is more than I have deserved. I am not surprised at Mrs. Mansfield,' he continued, after a pause, 'for it must be a great trial to her.'

'Ainslie says that he will put his view of the case before her, and he thinks that it will have a good effect.'

'I don't know how I am to thank Mr. Ainslie,' said Philip. 'At first I saw only the harder and more formal parts of his character, and I had no idea of his true goodness and nobleness, though it had begun to dawn upon me after the knocking-down affair.'

'And he says that he has misjudged you,' said Stanton. 'It is very well that you are beginning to appreciate each other, as it seems that you are to be brothers.'

'I can hardly understand, yet, how he can bring himself to that,' resumed Philip. 'I have so long felt as if my hand was against every one, and every one's hand was against me, that

it will take a little time before it will seem quite natural, Stanton.'

'That will soon come all right,' was the reply.

'I hope Mrs. Mansfield is not very bitter against me.'

'She is not exactly bitter.'

'I think her kindness of heart will plead for me, Stanton.'

'It will presently, I have no doubt, when she has had time for reflection.'

'I trust, Stanton, that I shall be able to prove that I am likely to make Blanche happy.'

'I hope so, my dear fellow,' replied Stanton, as, on reaching the surgery, he turned his face homewards.

## CHAPTER IX.

## HAPPINESS.

‘ Have you look’d  
At Edyrn? Have ye seen how nobly changed?  
This work of his is great and wonderful.  
His very face with change of heart is changed.’

TENNYSON.

As Philip approached the breakfast-room the next morning, he heard a great pattering of feet inside, and on opening the door he beheld Tom capering in a state of great excitement, and with an open letter in his hand.

‘ Hurrah ! hurrah !’ he cried, sending his arms round like windmill-sails.

‘ What’s the row now ?’ asked Philip.

‘ Cousin Kate is coming. Ain’t it jolly ?’

‘Why? It is not the holidays.’

‘No; but she’s been ill, you know.’

‘Cousin Kate? I did not know that.’

‘Not Cousin Kate. Little What’s-her-name.’

‘Little What’s-her-name, indeed!’ said Fanny. ‘I suppose you mean Miss Stanley; but she was taller than you at Christmas, Kate said; and I dare say she’s grown.’

‘Well, so have I grown,’ replied Tom. ‘Look at me!’ and he stretched out his arms and legs, showing considerably more wrist and ankle than propriety demanded.

‘My dear Tom,’ cried Fanny, ‘what a figure you are! I thought you looked uncommonly awkward, lately.’

‘Where is Jones?’ asked Philip.

‘He ain’t up yet. He’s dreadful lazy!’ cried Tom. ‘I’ll call him.’ And off he rushed, leaving the door open, of course; and the next moment they heard him drumming with both fists, with might and main, on Jones’s door, shouting out at the same time, at the top of his voice, that the coffee was getting cold.

‘I thought that Stanton seemed a little



smitten with Cousin Kate at Christmas,' observed Philip, a little roguishly. 'You found him no go, Fan.'

'I should think that they are just suited to each other,' replied Fanny, sagely, without condescending to notice her brother's last remark.

'I don't think Jones will go to sleep again after that,' said Philip to Tom, who entered at that moment.

'I don't mean him to.'

'But you have not told me yet how it is that Cousin Kate is coming?'

'Why, the little one, as I said before,' answered Tom, 'has been poorly, and so she's going to her aunt's for change; and they said Cousin Kate might come here if she liked, and she did like.'

'And father's coming back,' said Fanny.

'It is a very good thing, Phil, that you have got better before he comes,' observed Tom.

'Yes; it is a very good thing,' replied Philip, gravely.

'He is always better when Cousin Kate is here, and that is another good thing,' remarked

Tom. 'I suppose he does not want her to know how cross he is. We shall have something to tell her this time. Oh, I forgot.'

'What shall we have to tell her?' asked Fanny.

'Don't choke yourself, Tom!' said Philip.

'May I tell, Phil?'

'No, Tom.'

'I don't understand,' said Fanny.

'Never mind. You ain't to.'

'It's nothing interesting, I expect,' said Fanny, a little scornfully.

'It's *turble* interesting.'

'Be quiet, Tom!' from Philip.

'All right. You see if I can't keep a secret.'

'I don't believe there is one,' said Fanny.

Philip rose from the table just as Jones entered. Tom rushed after his brother with the last piece of bread and butter in his hand.

'Haven't they settled it yet?' he asked.

'No.'

'What a time they are! I should think it would not take a minute.'

‘They want to exercise your patience, perhaps.’

‘No ; it ain’t that. It must be law business. Lawyers are such slow coaches,’ added Tom, as he crammed his last crust into his mouth.

As Philip was passing down the Walks that evening he overtook Mr. Ainslie. The greeting between them was very different from what it had usually been. They walked on together, Reginald inquiring how Philip thought his aunt was, receiving for answer that there was not much improvement. Then there came an awkward pause. Philip felt that he ought to say something on the subject which was so near to the hearts of both, but he did not know how to begin. Ainslie, however, hastened to relieve his embarrassment.

‘I hope, Mr. Lyndon,’ he said, ‘that you will come to Victoria Terrace whenever you have a little time to spare : we shall both be very glad to see you.’

The ice thus broken, Philip expressed his gratitude for Reginald’s unexpected kindness to him, with a frankness and a warmth of feeling which took the curate by surprise. When they

reached the Terrace, Reginald asked Philip to walk in, which he very willingly did. It was pleasant to see Blanche's blush and her look of pleased surprise, when she saw who was with her brother.

'You must excuse me if I leave my sister to entertain you, Mr. Lyndon, as I have letters to write,' said Reginald, smiling, as he went through the archway into the other room.

How delightfully passed the next hour! With what sweet communing, what interchange of love and sympathy! Feelings of delicious happiness filled Philip's heart as he sat by Blanche's side; and her heart overflowed with joy and thankfulness that the time had come when she dared to love him, and to let him see her love, without fear and without concealment. The curate sat at his writing, hearing at intervals the rich tones of Philip's voice, low with its freight of deep and tender feeling, and the soft murmur of Blanche's answers.

'Oh, Blanche!' Philip said, 'if I had known this before, what would it not have saved me!'

'Now, Philip, I am going to scold.'

'And I am going to forestall your scolding.'

he replied. 'I know, love, that I was wrong to urge you as I did ; but if you had given me one little glimmer of hope, I should have been patient, Blanche.'

'If you had shown any sign at all of being patient, I might have given you credit for it.'

'Well, I was desperate, Blanche. You were really cruel—that is, if you did love me.'

'You would hardly let me love you, sir.'

'And you tried not, Blanche,' he said.

'Yes I did, very hard.'

A kiss on her soft cheek was his comment.

'That last time, in the garden, Blanche, before you went,' he resumed, after a pause—'I could not wish my worst enemy to be more miserable than I was then.'

'If you had not been so violent, sir, it would have ended more amicably. You would not be content with what I chose to give, and so you had to go without anything.'

'But the way in which you rushed to Stanton when you saw him, Blanche, almost as if you hated me.'

'I did not hate you, Philip.'

'Why did you do it ?'

‘Did you think that I hated you?’ she asked, without answering his question.

‘Not exactly. But I don’t understand.’

‘Never mind. You understand that you were wrong, sir?’

‘Oh yes; I understand that.’

‘And if *I* was not wrong, I was very foolish to care about such a tiresome man, who would neither rest himself nor let any one else, and who would not be sent away either.’

‘I do not mean to be sent away,’ answered Philip, laughing. ‘In regard to your other cause of complaint, Blanche, I will try to make up for past deficiencies. You will have but to express a wish, and it shall be law. I cannot say more than that.’

‘I shall expect to have that promise rigidly carried out, Mr. Lyndon,’ said Blanche.

‘Only give me a chance of doing it, love. That is all I want.’

When Reginald had finished his letters, he came into the drawing-room; and soon afterwards Philip said that he must go and see a patient.

When he was gone, Blanche came to her

brother, and, putting her hands on his shoulders, she kissed his forehead.

‘Oh, Reginald,’ she said, ‘you have made me feel so happy!’

‘I suppose you have got such a store of kisses, Blanche, that you have one to spare for me,’ said Reginald, smiling.

The Ainslies, in their ordinary intercourse, were generally very undemonstrative in the expression of their affections.

‘It is worth something, Blanche,’ he added, ‘to see you look so happy; and Lyndon, too. The change in his character is beginning to come out in the expression of his face. He looks quite like a different creature. I expect that he will be coming in most evenings now, Blanche, so that the state of affairs will soon become pretty well known. ‘I hope that my Aunt Mansfield will be amenable to persuasion; and then we will write to Uncle Ainslie. He ought to know as soon as possible. It will be rather a shock to poor George, I am afraid. However, he will have to make the best of it. He has been rather slow in the business, I must confess; so he must not be surprised, I suppose,

if another has been beforehand with him. When one has made up one's mind on such matters, there is nothing like going to the point at once. Mr. Philip certainly has not failed in that respect, in whatever else he may have been deficient.'



## CHAPTER X.

## A MYSTERY.

'Who can have done this thing?

ANON.

A FEW days after Reginald's recognition of Philip as his future brother-in-law, the former was passing up the Walks on his way to visit his aunt, when he met Master Tom, who was proceeding in his usual errant fashion, jumping over the bands of grass that divided the side-walks from the centre one.

'Come here, Tom; I wish to speak to you,' said the curate.

Tom came a little reluctantly, for though his conscience did not accuse him of any very flagrant breach of duty, there were always arising various little points of difference in his

intercourse with Mr. Ainslie, for which he was liable at any moment to be called in question.

‘I want to tell you, Tom,’ said the curate, ‘that I was mistaken about that rose-tree. It is discovered who broke it.’

‘Indeed!’ cried Tom, advancing boldly. ‘Who was it?’

‘I do not see that it is necessary that you should know.’

‘I beg your pardon,’ replied Tom. ‘I did not know that it was a secret.’

‘I am very glad that it is cleared up,’ observed Ainslie. ‘Though I had already come to the conclusion that I had been unjust in suspecting you.’

‘I am glad too,’ said Tom, his face brightening. ‘It isn’t nice for a fellow to be accused of doing what he hasn’t done. But it is very odd it should have come out all this long time after.’

Tom longed to know how the discovery had been made, but he did not venture to inquire further of the Reverend Reginald. He determined, however, to ask Blanche on the very next opportunity.

Reginald, on his arrival, found Mrs. Mansfield

so much better that he ventured to commence the exhortation which he had prepared. He conducted his argument with considerable skill, laying the most stress upon the depth and the genuine nature of Lyndon's repentance, illustrating his subject by the very opportune sermon of the previous Sunday. Mrs. Mansfield was in a very unfit state to combat her nephew with any chance of success, even if she had had any connected arguments in readiness, which she had not. All that she could urge in answer to his harangue was her repugnance to allow her niece to link her fate with a man whose past was of such a kind, and her fears that the happiness of Blanche's married life would be destroyed by the influence of those evil passions which had already borne such bitter fruit. The fact that her own son, of whom she had been so proud, and in whose integrity until lately she had trusted so implicitly, not only had been indulging in habits of profligacy, but had added to the enormity of the sin by the deceit and hypocrisy by which it had been accompanied, tended to make her view Lyndon's conduct more leniently than she would otherwise have done. She could not refuse to admit Reginald's plea

that Lyndon's subsequent repentance, and the dauntless resolution with which he had refused to temporise with his persecutors, even when he had no hope of winning Blanche, ought to be counted in his favour. She also felt, that, as all the others were against her, and she should consequently be ultimately obliged to yield, it might as well be done at once; especially as her holding out would be a source of great sorrow to Blanche, whom she loved too tenderly to be willing needlessly to grieve.

Reginald was leaving the house after this interview, when he met Philip coming in; on which the curate said, that he would wait while Philip saw his patient, as he wished to speak to him. The young surgeon did not keep his new friend waiting long, and the two walked on together.

'I have just been having some conversation with my aunt,' commenced Reginald, 'and she has so far adopted my views as to give her consent to your engagement to my sister.'

'Mr. Ainslie,' said Philip, earnestly, 'I don't know how to thank you for what you have done for me.'

'Oh, don't mention it,' was the reply. 'And

now,' he continued, 'as we are all practically of one mind, there will be no motive for keeping the matter secret.'

'I am sure I shall be very glad to tell my friends,' said Philip. 'I am afraid, Mr. Ainslie,' he continued, 'that our engagement is likely to be a much longer one than I could wish.' And he proceeded to put the curate in possession of the state of his affairs, omitting neither the difficulty about his father, nor that with regard to the debts at L——; and adding that for some time to come Tom would have to be provided for.

'Ah! I see,' said Reginald, much pleased with Lyndon's frankness. 'You are quite right to consider all these things; but perhaps the difficulty may be got over sooner than you expect; Blanche is not altogether dowerless, my aunt having left her money to her, the will to take effect either when Blanche should be of age, or on her marriage, should that occur previously.'

'I am very glad indeed,' said Philip, overjoyed at the curate's news, 'to hear of anything that will prevent the time from being so long delayed as I feared.'

‘I have no great admiration for long engagements,’ observed Reginald, ‘though they are sometimes inevitable ; not that I should advise undue haste in such matters. It is of no use asking you to walk in,’ he continued, when they reached Victoria Terrace, ‘as I am going to the class. Blanche will be beforehand with me, as I am rather late ; but we shall be glad to see you afterwards if you have half-an-hour to spare. It seems that we are to lose my cousin George,’ he added, as he shook hands.

‘Indeed !’ said Lyndon, more delighted than he chose to show.

‘Yes. Stanton had a letter from him, this morning I think he said ; and George has obtained a post in London, of some standing, I believe ; and he hopes to arrange for his cousin, Henry Stanton, whom I think you have not seen, to succeed him in the business here.’

‘It will be in the family, then,’ Philip observed, as the most appropriate remark that he could think of.

They went on their separate ways ; Philip’s heart bounding with the sense of relief which he experienced at the prospect of being free from George’s presence. Some time after-

wards he arrived at home, and when he went into the drawing-room, Tom, who was kicking about on the sofa, rose suddenly to an erect position, exclaiming :

‘What do you think is come out now, Phil?’

‘I don’t know; what is it?’

‘Why, it’s found out who broke the rose-tree.’

‘Indeed!’ said Philip.

‘Who was it?’ asked Fanny.

‘I don’t know.’

‘How do you know that it is found out, then?’

‘’Cos Ainslie told me, but he would not say who did it. I wonder who it could be. Who do you think, Phil?’

‘Why should I know, any more than you?’

‘Well, I thought you might guess.’

‘Perhaps Miss Ainslie broke it, and did not like to tell.’

‘Phil!’ cried Tom, jumping up, ‘you know that is not true.’

‘Don’t overturn the table, Tom,’ said Fanny.

‘Well, you wanted me to guess,’ replied Philip.

‘I’ll ask Harry and Stanton,’ said Tom. ‘I

went to Harry's, and he was not in. I *can't* think how it has come out all this time afterwards. It's very odd.'

'It's very odd that Mr. Ainslie did not say who did it,' observed Fanny.

'Ainslie thinks boys should not ask questions except about Scripture history, and all that,' said Tom. 'I believe if we asked questions till twelve o'clock at night at the class, he'd answer 'em all. I'll go round and see if Harry is in now, for I dare say he knows; and if he doesn't, Stanton knows; and if *he* doesn't, Blanche knows, at any rate.'

'Fanny,' said Philip, as soon as Tom was gone, 'I dare say you will be surprised to hear that I am engaged.'

'Engaged! You, Philip!' exclaimed Fanny, in great amazement.

'Yes.'

'Not to Miss Ainslie, surely!'

'Yes; to Miss Ainslie.'

'I wonder that she dared to venture on you!'

Philip had sometimes wondered at the same thing himself; but it did not please him any the more, on that account, to hear it so frankly stated. He took up his sister's wool, which



lay close to him on the table, and began to play with it.

‘Give that to me, Philip.’

He tossed it to her, and leaning back in his chair, put his hands in his pockets, and sat looking at her. A slight cloud had come over his face, but he certainly did not look so cross as he would formerly have done at such a speech.

‘I don’t think she has been used to go on as we do, Philip,’ continued Fanny; ‘and she looks as if she could not bear much rough usage. I hope you will be kind to her, Philip.’

‘If I am not, I shall wish that I had never been born!’ he answered, with so much emotion that Fanny was surprised.

‘Does her brother know?’

‘Yes; and he has been very kind indeed.’

‘Philip!’ exclaimed Fanny, staring at him with very wide-open eyes.

‘I was surprised, I must confess,’ he said, half amused at her astonishment.

‘And the others?’ she asked.

‘They have agreed too.’

‘Well! I am surprised. I suppose she has seen you in your best aspects, Philip.’

‘She has seen me in all sorts of aspects,’ he

answered, a little gruffly. 'I think she knows my faults pretty well.'

Fanny shrugged her shoulders.

'At any rate she won't aggravate me, Fanny.'

'She had better not.'

'You think that you had better,' he said, deeply grieved.

'I don't want to be unkind, Philip; but you have some qualities which I am afraid will make it impossible for you to be a good husband.'

'Miss Ainslie does not seem to think so,' he said, after a pause.

'Perhaps she does not know.'

'Perhaps you had better tell her.'

'I might tell her too much, Philip.'

'I have saved you the trouble, Fanny.'

'Well, Philip, if you have told her what you have done wrong, and really mean to do better in the future, there is some chance that she may be happy.'

'Some chance!' he repeated.

'You know, or at least I suppose you know, Philip,' said Fanny, 'that your temper is none of the best. However,' she continued, 'I must say that you have been very different lately

from what you were some time ago, and I hope that it is the beginning of a real change. How Mr. Ainslie has managed to agree I cannot imagine. However, I hope Blanche will be happy.'

'You don't hope that I shall be happy.'

'You are sure to be happy if you deserve to be so.'

'Oh !' said Philip.

'I suppose you will not be married just yet ?'

'We have not settled,' he replied. And he told her what Mr. Ainslie had said, and that he had thought of proposing that his father should have a definite sum of money allowed him, and should live in London, an arrangement that he knew would meet with the approval of Mr. Lyndon.

'And Tom, I suppose, will live with you ?'

'Oh yes, if Blanche does not object, which of course she will not. And this will still be your home, Fanny. I am sure that Blanche will be glad.'

'Gladder than you, perhaps.'

'Well, you are not very kind to me, Fanny.'

'You have often vexed me, Philip, and I am

not so forgiving as Tom. 'I cannot help being rather anxious, too, about Blanche. Are you going out again?' she asked, as he went towards the door.

'I am going to Victoria Terrace,' he replied.

At this moment Tom burst into the room, almost knocking down Philip in his hurry.

'Oh, Phil!' he cried. 'Harry says that everybody has agreed, and it's all right. Hurrah! Does Fan know?' And he turned a somersault just before Philip, to the imminent endangerment of his sister's work-table.

'Yes,' replied Philip, smiling. 'Now, be sensible, Tom, and don't turn the house upside down,' he added.

'Oh, I *am* so glad. Ain't you, Fan?' he asked, as Philip walked off.

It was almost impossible to resist the contagion of Tom's merriment.

'Yes,' she replied.

'Why, you don't seem half pleased. Don't you like it?'

'Yes.'

'What then?'

'Nothing, Tom. I hope they'll be happy.'

'Happy! Of course they will. I'm sure

she likes him. I know'd it a good while ago ; and he's *turble* fond of her. She's a real angel ; and he's not half a bad fellow when he's good-tempered, and he'll be good-tempered when there's nothing to aggravate him. Oh, they'll be all right—as right as a trivet. You see if they aren't.' And Tom performed a series of somersets round the room ; and then he rushed off, post haste, to see what Jones was about.

It was rather late when Philip returned. He was just hanging up his hat in the hall, when Fanny came out of the drawing-room.

'Good-night, Fanny,' he said, thinking that she was going to bed.

'I want to speak to you, Phil,' was her reply.

He followed her into the drawing-room willingly, for she never called him 'Phil' when she was going to say anything unpleasant. The expression of his face was one of great happiness and contentment.

'Phil, I am very sorry that I said what I did just now.'

'Well, I thought you rather unkind, Fanny, when I had just told you of the best thing that ever happened to me.'

'It was unkind, Phil.'

‘Oh, well, never mind; it is all right now,’ he replied.

‘I shall be very glad of your being happy.’

‘If I deserve it?’ he asked.

‘Yes, if you deserve it,’ she replied, smiling. ‘I hope you will,’ she added; ‘but I hoped when we first came here, and it did not answer.’

‘Well, I was in great difficulties then, Fanny.’

‘And have you got out of them?’

‘Yes, I hope so. Thanks partly to Stanton Mansfield.’

‘Was that what he was about when you were ill?’

‘Yes; he was helping me about something. He has been a good friend to me, Fanny.’

‘And Blanche knows all about it, you say?’

‘Yes.’

‘About the lady, too, Philip?’

‘Yes,’ he replied, looking down.

‘I almost wonder she got over that, Phil.’

‘Well, she did not for a long time; but I told her how it was.’

‘And that made it better, did it?’

‘I don’t know that it made it better,’ he replied; ‘but she knew that I was very sorry.’

‘You might well be sorry, Phil, if you wanted to marry her.’

‘I was sorry before that, Fanny.’

‘Were you? Well, it is a good thing that you were, Phil. I shall be very glad to see you different. It is useless to expect anything of father, but I know that you are capable of better things. Your being as you have been has been a great trouble to me, Phil, though I have not said much about it.’

‘Well, Fanny, I hope that you will have no more trouble with me.’

‘And that will give Tom a better chance,’ said Fanny. ‘I believe he means to be a good boy, with all his megrims and vagaries, but he has not had a fair chance.’

‘Well, between father and me, I am afraid he has not, poor boy. He has seemed to be all I had to cling to.’

‘He has been all the comfort I have had, too,’ said Fanny. ‘I hope he will grow up to be a good man.’

‘I should be sorry for him to go through

what I have,' said Philip, shaking his head. I hope he will be a better man than I have been.'

'It is never too late to mend, Phil; and I am sure that if you are going to satisfy Miss Blanche Ainslie, you'll do,' said Fanny, merrily. 'And I shall be as glad as Tom. He is almost out of his wits with joy.'



## CHAPTER XI.

## THE WALK.

‘Thy dress was like the lilies,  
And thy heart as pure as they.  
One of God’s holy messengers  
Did walk with me that day.’

LONGFELLOW.

‘I found that Harry did not know anything about it, Phil,’ said Tom the next morning, at breakfast.

‘About what?’

‘Why, the rose-tree affair; but Stanton did, only he would not tell, and he said I must not ask Blanche; but I think I have found it out.

‘Indeed! I should think that the person who did it would be very much frightened if he knew,’ said Philip.

‘It struck me all at once, when I was going

to bed,' continued Tom, with a gravity becoming the occasion—'some more bread, Phil, please—and I thought—thank you—that it must have been the rector.'

Both Tom's auditors burst into a hearty laugh at this speech.

'Hurrah !' cried Philip. 'Capital idea ! It's a wonder I did not suggest that.'

'That's not at all likely,' said Fanny, as soon as she could speak with laughing.

'I think it is,' replied Tom, gravely. 'In the first place, it's somebody they don't want to tell about, *that's* clear, and he used often to go to ask after Ainslie when he was ill.'

'He would not be likely to go on the grass,' objected Fanny.

'Oh, he would be very likely to walk round and look at the chrysanthemums or something, for I heard him admiring them one day when I was there ; especially if they were a long time coming to the door. I generally had to wait *ever* so long,' said Tom, stirring his coffee vigorously.

'But he would have told if he had done it,' said Fanny.

'Oh, I dare say he stumbled over something

without seeing what it was. You know how he holds his head ;' and Tom fixed his little chin at the angle at which the rector carried his, where-at Philip and Fanny laughed heartily.

'Now, don't go and tell everybody your grand discovery,' said Fanny.

'Keep it a secret by all means,' rejoined Philip, 'or you'll get into disgrace with the rector for ever and a day. Is not Jones down yet ?' he asked.

'No ; he's such a lazy fellow. He'll never be much good. I've *woked* him up twice, and he's gone to sleep again ; and he's going a journey, too.'

'He has been up in the night,' said Philip.

'However they manage to wake him and make him get up, it passes me to tell,' observed Tom. 'We must get our work done before Cousin Kate comes. Father won't come till night ; that's a blessing. Phil, may I take the dog-cart to the station ?'

'And tumble Cousin Kate out ? No ; certainly not. Besides, I want it.'

'All right. We must ship Jones off first—that is, if he gets up in time.'

Fanny had several arrangements to make

relative to the expected guest; and then she hastened to Victoria Terrace, where she fortunately found Blanche alone.

‘Philip has told me,’ she said, kissing Blanche’s blushing cheek; ‘and I’m so glad, dear Blanche.’

‘He said he had told you, and that you had scolded him,’ replied Blanche.

‘That was naughty of him. I was afraid, at first, that he would not make you happy; but from what he has told me, I think that he will. I thought afterwards that I had not been very kind, and we made it up when he came back. You will just suit him, Blanche, because you are so gentle, and that is what he wants.’

‘I hope I shall make him happy,’ said Blanche.

‘I am sure that you will. I am glad that your brother takes the view of it that he does. I should have expected that he would make a great opposition.’

‘Reginald is really very kind,’ replied Blanche; ‘much more so than he appears to strangers. In fact, I don’t think that I quite understood him until now.’

‘And I am sure I did not understand Phil,’

replied Fanny. 'You should see what a state of delight Tom is in.'

'Tom has always been a favourite of mine,' said Blanche, smiling.

'I hope he will tame down a little before you come to closer quarters with him,' said Fanny, 'or it is very likely that you will wish him farther off before long.'

'I hope I shall not do that. I think I know how to make allowance for boys, though Tom is, perhaps, a little more tricky than most of them.'

'He has a good deal of his brother in him,' rejoined Fanny; 'and if you can do with the one, perhaps you can with the other.'

When Fanny returned, she found that Tom, who had seen Jones off in the interim, was getting very uneasy lest they should be too late to meet Cousin Kate. He had been reduced to climbing up the gate, and hanging head downwards from it, by way of soothing his impatience. Spying out his sister from this position, he got on his feet, and ran to meet her, to save time, as he said, when he found, to his great disgust, that she had to go into the house to give some directions; after which they set

off together. They were quite early enough at the station ; indeed, they had to wait some time, the train being a little late.

Cousin Kate looked as bright and kind as ever. She and Fanny got into the cab, and Tom mounted on the box beside the man.

‘How is Philip now?’

‘Oh, he is almost well. I have some news to tell of him.’

‘Is he engaged, then?’

‘Yes. Guess who is the lady.’

‘Not the curate’s dainty little sister?’

‘Yes. Are you not surprised?’

‘Well, I hardly expected it. I am very glad indeed.’

‘So am I.’ And Fanny went on to communicate her ideas respecting it, which lasted until their arrival at the house.

When they came down to luncheon they found Philip in the dining-room. He greeted Kate with a smile, and there was an expression in his face which told her that he had got free from the difficulties which had oppressed him during her former visit.

‘I must congratulate you, Phil,’ she said.

‘Ain’t it jolly!’ cried Tom, before his brother could speak.

‘I shall be glad to claim her as a cousin.’

‘She’ll be my sister!’ said Tom, as if that were a great deal better; ‘and, gracious goodness!’ he cried, almost in dismay, ‘Ainslie will be my brother!’

‘He’ll be my brother, at any rate,’ said Philip, laughing.

‘Then he must be mine.’

‘Is that so dreadful?’ asked Cousin Kate. ‘I thought he seemed very earnest.’

‘Oh, he’s earnest enough,’ replied Tom.

‘Tom thinks that he will have to give up tricks and everything like them if he is to be the curate’s brother, I suppose,’ observed Fanny.

‘You need not be alarmed, Tom,’ said Philip, smiling.

‘Well, I think he can’t be quite my brother,’ said Tom, taking comfort; ‘but I don’t understand how it is.’

Philip and Fanny proceeded to ask after Uncle Tom, and Kate to inquire about her Uncle Philip, who, she was not particularly gratified to learn, was expected home that

evening. Tom had relapsed into silence ; but whether it was, that his attention was devoted to the important subject of luncheon, or that he was endeavouring to get a clearer idea of what would be his future connection with the Rev. Reginald Ainslie, did not appear.

‘ Phil,’ he observed, at length, ‘ you had better have the wedding while cousin is here, and then she can be a bridesmaid.’

‘ I am afraid that would savour of undue haste,’ replied Philip. And he repeated what the curate had said with regard to the duration of engagements, at which the two girls laughed.

‘ When is the wedding to be ?’ asked Cousin Kate.

‘ It is not settled yet,’ replied Philip.

‘ You see,’ observed Tom, ‘ it was only finished settling yesterday ; so there has not been much time to talk over things, especially as it was the class last night. Why, Phil,’ he added, turning to his brother, ‘ next year we shall have to keep the wedding-day !’

‘ What shall you do ? Make a great bonfire ?’

‘ You had better have it on the 5th of November,’ cried Tom. ‘ Wouldn’t that be jolly ?’



‘I am afraid Blanche would not like that,’ replied Philip ; ‘and I am sure it would not suit Ainslie.’

‘Oh, I forgot him.’

‘I suppose, Philip,’ said Kate, ‘that you have one patient whom it is necessary to visit every day, have you not ? I expect we shall not see much of you in the evenings ?’

‘I expect a walk will be very good for my patient’s health, sometimes,’ observed Philip.

‘You should go along the footpath behind the Hall,’ said Tom. ‘It is lovely there.’

‘I have not been beyond the waterman’s cottage, though it looks pretty farther on,’ replied Philip ; ‘but I must go. Run and see if my horse is ready, Tom.’

In the evening the two girls sat in the drawing-room having a quiet talk, and Tom stretched himself at full length on the rug, rolling from side to side, and holding up a book which he was engaged in reading, thus securing the advantage of enjoying physical and mental occupation both at once. It was not long before Stanton and Harry Mansfield were announced. Stanton greeted Cousin Kate with a frank cordiality which Fanny thought was

not absolutely necessary. Stanton, on his part, was thinking how very pretty Miss Lyndon looked, and the half-shy glance that she gave him did not at all diminish the effect. Miss Kate, he thought, made an excellent foil to her cousin, with her less classic features, and her shorter and less graceful figure.

‘Your brother is not in, I suppose?’ he said.

‘No. But we know where he is,’ replied Fanny, demurely; ‘and if you particularly wish to see him, I dare say he will not mind being sent for.’

‘It is not very pressing. You can ask him, and tell me to-morrow at the school. My mother has taken a fancy that a trip on the sea would do her good; so we thought of having a picnic at L—— on Tuesday, if the weather be fine, and if your brother thinks that my mother is equal to it.’

‘I will ask him.’

‘That will be jolly!’ exclaimed Tom, to whom Harry had been communicating the proposal.

‘You have not seen L——, Cousin Kate?’

‘No. Is it pretty?’

‘It has rather a peculiar kind of prettiness,’ replied Stanton. ‘There are the “long backs of

the bushless downs" to look at, and some rather fine cliffs.'

'I think the hills are splendid!' said Harry.

'They are quite big enough to run up and down,' observed Stanton. 'We thought of having luncheon on the great hill,' he continued, turning to Fanny. 'My mother has set her heart upon getting up there; but I don't see how she will manage it.'

'Cannot she drive up?' asked Fanny.

'The hill is so steep, that I don't know whether it will be safe.'

'There is a lovely donkey, that will draw her up beautifully!' said Harry; at which they all laughed, though, as Cousin Kate said, she did not see why they should, as it was quite orthodox to go up hills on donkeys.

'I hope that we shall not be too much for Mrs. Mansfield,' said Fanny.

'Oh, if the boys are noisy, we'll tip them over into the sea,' replied Stanton.

'We shall save you the trouble, for we mean to have a bathe,' said Tom.

'I think there will be room enough for every one on the top of the hill,' observed Stanton.

The two boys stole off into the garden, where

they were soon running and jumping to their hearts' content. Stanton requested to have some music, on which the cousins sang and played; and not long afterwards he took his leave, expressing as he did so the pleasure that he felt at the prospect of the two families being so closely connected.

'Mr. Stanton Mansfield is a very nice young man,' remarked Cousin Kate. 'He is kindly, and sensible too.'

'Oh, he is sensible enough for anything,' was the reply.

There was something in Fanny's tone that her cousin did not quite understand.

'Is it possible that you like him?' she thought. She did not say anything, however; but she determined to keep her eyes open for the future.

Philip found Blanche quite ready for a walk, and she acceded willingly to Tom's suggestion as to the direction. She and Philip accordingly bent their steps to the bottom of the town, and along the avenue leading from it; soon turning to the right across some fields, where stood the waterman's cottage, with its rustic paling and its clustering clematis and woodbines; and

then on by the little streamlet, where the minnows darted about in the clear, rippling water. The prettiest part of the path lay behind the Hall, where the water ran on either hand in various winding channels, soon spreading out on the left into a tiny lake, which gleamed beneath the branches of the trees, and from whose bosom came the cry of the water-fowl and the plashing sound of their wings in their play. The trees met overhead in a thick umbrageous canopy, in which a chorus of birds were singing, while here and there a ray of sunlight glittered and sparkled on the dancing water. The banks were crowded with various water-loving plants, among which a rich growth of hart's-tongue ferns were uncurling their tender leaves.

‘This is beautiful!’ said Philip, as they sat on the rail of a rustic bridge, where one of the branches of the stream flowed beneath the path, making a pleasant tinkling music as it went.

‘Blanche,’ he resumed, ‘I feel, that, if I have your love, no great harm can come to me. Your love will make the bitter sweet; it will soften pain and sorrow, and will take the sting even from death.’

‘Dear Philip!’ Blanche replied, ‘it is God who has led us to each other. Our hearts must rise to Him in gratitude together.’

‘I first felt God’s love in yours, Blanche,’ he said. ‘I can see, now, how He has chastened me in love, that I might be led at last to you. But I have passed through a terrible storm, and was nearly wrecked when I was almost at the shore.’

‘It is all over now, love,’ said Blanche.

‘I have borne my cross somehow, I hardly know how,’ he continued ; ‘but it has been very heavy, Blanche. The shadow will come over me sometimes, even when I am with you, and you must have patience with me, love.’

She looked up at him with her pure eyes full of a deep and holy love, which he felt not even the might of death could quench.

‘Oh, love!’ she said, ‘I will not fail you.’

She rose, and, standing before him, she pressed her lips upon his forehead in a pure and tender kiss. The trouble in Philip’s eyes disappeared, and instead there came a soft sweet light of faith and hope.

‘Dear Blanche!’ he said, kissing her tenderly. ‘You are my good angel ; you have led me from

death to life ! mine for ever, both for earth and heaven !'

The light was fading from the sky, and the birds were twittering their sweet ' Good-night ' among the branches, as they returned with full hearts up the avenue towards the town.

## CHAPTER XII.

## THE DRIVE.

‘Thinking to hide the depth by troubling of the flood.’

SPENSER.

PHILIP, on hearing of the proposed excursion, said that it would do Mrs. Mansfield good, and Tom was despatched to make the report, which he very willingly did.

As Mr. Lyndon was expected by the midnight train, Philip waited up for him, notwithstanding the remonstrances of the girls, who offered to take his place, saying that he ought not to lose his rest when it could be avoided. He, however, decided to sit up himself, as he wished to tell his father at once about his engagement.

Mr. Lyndon appeared to be very much im-



proved in health by his lengthened sojourn on the Continent. Philip was glad to see that he was in a tolerable humour, and that he did not grumble at the hot supper which was ready for him. When he had fairly commenced his meal, Philip made his announcement.

‘Engaged!’ repeated Mr. Lyndon, scornfully; ‘and to that little white-faced thing! I don’t admire your taste.’

The hot blood rose in Philip’s face. But he controlled himself. He felt that it would be a poor compliment to Blanche to quarrel about her with his father. After a pause, he communicated to Mr. Lyndon the plan which he had thought of for him.

‘Very good. That is an excellent idea, if only you will make the sum a decent one.’

‘I will make it as much as I can,’ replied his son.

‘And you had better have the wedding as soon as possible,’ resumed Mr. Lyndon, ‘lest the lady should change her mind. You have managed better than might have been expected.’

Philip turned away to hide the scorn that curled his lip at the idea that he was going to marry Blanche for her money.

‘How you have contrived it I cannot think,’ continued Mr. Lyndon. ‘I give you credit for being cleverer than I thought. How is it about that mess that you told me you were in? You had better mind that they don’t get wind of it, or that canting, hypocritical brother of hers will put a stop to the wedding.’

‘Her brother knows all about it, and she does too,’ said Philip, proudly.

‘The deuce they do!’ cried Mr. Lyndon. ‘Then, I suppose,’ he said, after a pause, ‘that they did not like to draw back. Was that it?’

‘No, that was not it, sir. I told Miss Ainslie before we were engaged. I did not intend to be either engaged or married with a lie in my mouth.’

‘Very grand indeed!’ said Mr. Lyndon, contemptuously. ‘However,’ he added, ‘it seems to have succeeded so far. You have your own way of doing things, it appears, Philip, but I cannot say that I understand it.’

Philip retired to his own room a good deal ruffled, though he was much relieved that the interview was over.

The arrangements for the picnic were finally concluded at the Sunday-school the next day.

Stanton seemed a little more genial than usual, under the influence, as Fanny thought, of her cousin's charms.

The combined effects of his niece's presence and of the pleasant prospect which his son had opened out before him made Mr. Lyndon somewhat more agreeable than he usually was at home. On hearing of the picnic he declined going, however, though Stanton had included him in the invitation when he had heard that he was expected home.

'Oh, you had better come,' said Tom, 'and you can talk to Mrs. Mansfield while we run about.'

'I don't think that even Mrs. Mansfield's fascinations will induce me to go,' was the reply. 'You will all be tired of that sort of thing before the day is over.'

'I shall not,' said Tom. 'I never have been yet.'

'Tom, if there is any chance of your time hanging heavy on your hands, you can take a book and study a little for a change,' suggested Philip. 'It strikes me that you have not done much in that line lately.'

'And it strikes me,' replied Tom, 'that if I

take a book it will pretty quickly find itself at the bottom of the sea.'

'In that case we had better postpone the studies till another time.'

'All right. We'll begin in earnest after the picnic.'

The whole party went to church in the evening; and after the service Blanche returned home with them.

Mr. Lyndon went through the courtesies proper to the occasion, and then departed, to the great relief of the others. A very pleasant couple of hours was spent, until it was time for Philip to see Blanche home. They called at Mrs. Mansfield's on their way, for Reginald.

Philip's heart swelled with gratitude, as he walked by Blanche's side, and thought of his own feelings not so long before, when, every time that he had obtained an interview with her, it had been against her will; and as he thought, too, of his own longing to be admitted to the circle of her friends, who had now received him with open arms, and had treated him as if he had been one of themselves. He went in at Victoria Terrace only long enough for a

few tender words, a sweet 'Good-night,' and a loving look from Blanche, which soothed his almost too deeply-stirred feelings.

Blanche had been surprised at nothing so much as at the change of demeanour in her lover since his engagement. The almost desperate determination of manner which had formerly distinguished him was entirely gone ; the vehemence from which she had so often shrunk had given place to the gentle tenderness which she had sometimes seen in him before. Now that she had yielded him her love he was content. His heart was satisfied and restful in his trust in her affection. Much as he longed for the expression of her love, he did not seek to force it from her ; neither did he wish to worry her with the passionate utterances of his own deep devotion.

Thus Blanche's affection, which, from her former experience of her lover, she had feared would be sorely tried in closer intercourse with him, became strengthened and deepened as the days passed on.

When Philip returned home he delivered a message from Stanton to the effect that he would bring the phaeton the next morning to

take the Misses Lyndon for a drive with his cousin if they would like to go, a proposal to which the cousins readily agreed.

‘H’m! That is a coming out for Mr. Stanton Mansfield,’ said Fanny. ‘He is turning polite all at once, it seems. You must have bewitched him, Kate.’

Kate laughed, and said that she was not aware of having exerted any particular influence over him.

‘I noticed two or three little things yesterday, and several at Christmas when you were here,’ replied Fanny. ‘Trifles show which way the wind blows, you know.’

‘He will make a very good husband, whenever he marries,’ said Philip, decidedly.

‘Oh, he’s well enough for any one who can take a fancy to him,’ was the reply.

‘I should think that any woman whom he loved, and who had a grain of sense, could like him, Fanny,’ said Philip, a little indig-  
nantly.

‘A grain of sense—ah well; but everybody has not a grain of sense, you know, Philip. You have credit for a great many grains, Cousin Kate; so, if he makes up to you, you are bound

to have him, now that Phil has laid down the law.'

'That requires very serious consideration,' replied Kate, laughing. 'I did not know that I was likely to get into such a dilemma.'

The next morning, at the appointed time, Stanton drove up in the phaeton with Blanche and Harry. The latter was very anxious that Tom should accompany them. He, however, said that he was busy, and that, besides, there was no room. There was, in fact, hardly room for Harry, but Blanche had been reluctant to disappoint him.

They had a delightful drive across the undulating downs, on which were scattered thousands of sheep and lambs. The tinkle of the sheep-bell came pleasantly to the ear, and the joyous song of the lark floated downwards from the blue heavens.

From some of the highest points on the downs a glimpse could be caught occasionally of the distant azure of the ocean; while in the secluded hollows, looking as if they were shut in from the rest of the world, were cosy farmsteads, each with its sheltering ricks and old-world-looking barns built in the form of a cross,



and with deep, overhanging eaves ; or quaint little villages embosomed in trees, the vine and the rose clustering over the thatched and mud-walled cottages.

Sometimes they passed up a narrow valley, whose now turfy sides had been in far-off times cut into a series of gigantic steps by the sweep of mighty ocean-currents ; and sometimes beneath the branches of an ancient wood, where the birds warbled in the shade, and the flickering sunbeams chased each other over the young green ferns and the soft rich moss.

Stanton was certainly more lively than usual. Perhaps Cousin Kate had inspired him. Blanche looked very happy, though occasionally a little dreamy. Harry indulged in regrets for the absence of his beloved Tom whenever he saw anything that particularly pleased him ; while the Misses Lyndon were lively and sparkling, though one of them was a little more tart in her manner than seemed needful, and sometimes spoke to Stanton rather more sharply than he thought the occasion required.



## CHAPTER XIII.

## THE PICNIC.

' True love's the gift which God has given  
To man alone beneath the heaven.

. . . . .  
It is the secret sympathy,  
The silver link, the silken tie,  
Which heart to heart, and mind to mind,  
In body and in soul can bind.'

SIR W. SCOTT.

THE next morning rose as brilliantly as even Tom and Harry could desire. There was not a cloud in the sky, or a breath of wind stirring. Tom rose early, and had some difficulty in disposing of his surplus energy during the time which intervened before his brother and sister made their appearance. Breakfast was a great relief, and when that was over he had work

enough set him to 'take the mischief out of him,' as Philip expressed it.

It had been arranged that Stanton should drive his mother and his cousins down to W——, to save them the bustle of the railway; and that the others should follow by the train. It was a twenty minutes' walk from the station to the pier, but Tom got there in half the time, and announced to the Mansfield party that the others were coming.

It was delightful on the sea. The air was soft and fresh, and there was just enough dancing of the waves to be exhilarating.

Blanche sat on one side of the vessel, with Philip standing by her, looking satisfied and happy. Mrs. Mansfield kept in the middle, with Stanton near her; while Reginald occupied himself with attentions to the two cousins, and the boys wandered up and down and here and there, now refreshing themselves with the breeze on the bridge, and then almost scorching themselves by their proximity to the engine. The only time that Tom was still was when he was sitting over the paddle-box, so close to the edge that he kept an old lady who was near in a constant fidget lest a sudden movement of

the vessel should pitch him off into the water.

Philip had admired from W—— the white cliffs which skirted the bay, and he was very glad to have an opportunity of seeing them nearer. Reginald had a pocket-map of the neighbourhood with him, and he pointed out the various places of interest as they passed. The curiously-twisted strata which were to be seen in the cliff as they approached their destination were surveyed with interest by the whole party, and were explained as lucidly as time permitted by the curate.

They soon passed into the tiny horse-shoe-shaped cove at L—— ; and, in a few minutes more, some on foot and the others in a carriage, they were toiling up the road which wound through the village and behind the long, steep hill that overlooked the cove.

Tom and Harry ran on first to secure the 'lovely little donkey,' which was fortunately forthcoming, accompanied by a woman in a white sun-bonnet. By its valuable assistance Mrs. Mansfield and the 'grub,' as Tom called it, reached the top of the hill in safety.

'I had a letter from Mrs. Carrington this

morning,' said Philip to Blanche, as they walked up the hill together.

'Indeed! I did not know that she was a correspondent of yours.'

'Nor has she been; but she wrote twice to Fanny so kindly when I was ill, that I felt I ought to thank her for that and for all the things which she sent from the Hall for me; and I could not very well do so without telling her of my engagement, as she had taken so much interest in my affairs.'

'You seem very fond of Mrs. Carrington, Philip,' said Blanche.

'Well, so I am, in a way. She has been a good friend to me, and she gave me sympathy and kindness at a time when I was very unhappy, and when some one else treated me in a manner that was very—"cruel" was the word I was going to use, but I suppose I may venture to say "cold," without fear of question.'

'Then I suppose I ought to feel grateful to her.'

'I shall, at any rate, all my life,' replied Philip; and he proceeded to read the letter. It expressed pleasure at his recovery, and congratulated him warmly on his engagement; con-

cluding with the statement that the writer was on the point of starting for the Highlands, having been sent for to go to her husband, who was suffering from an attack of inflammation of the lungs, caught on a fishing expedition. There was an expression of frank, earnest feeling running through the letter which was very winning, and Blanche was much pleased with it.

Philip soon afterwards joined Stanton, who had kept at his mother's side during the ascent ; but as they had now reached the brow of the hill he walked on with Philip, who put Mrs. Carrington's letter into his hand. There was a postscript which Philip had not read to Blanche ; it was as follows :

‘I have just heard that your old friend, or enemy, Mrs. Gordon, has eloped with an officer of a regiment which is starting for India, and that Major Gordon is with his friends.’

‘Whew!’ said Stanton, as he read these lines.

‘I heard a rumour the other day that there was some unpleasantness at the Hall before Mrs. Gordon left.’

‘I should not wonder,’ replied Philip. ‘Colonel Carrington was more attentive to Mrs.

Gordon than I should have liked if I had been his wife.'

'Poor Mrs. Carrington! She has had her troubles, it seems.'

'Yes,' said Philip, shaking his head; 'and she is worthy of a better fate.'

'So I should think, from what you have told me. Mrs. Gordon will be out of your way for the present.'

'Yes. That is a good thing, at any rate.'

'And George will too,' observed Stanton. 'I want to tell you about that; but just wait a minute.'

'They had now reached a point which seemed very suitable for a halt. Stanton, having seated his mother on a cushion which had been brought for the purpose, turned again to Philip, and the two stood a little aside, apparently gazing with great interest at the sea.

'I wanted to hear about that. Ainslie mentioned it to me,' said Philip.

'He has quite left D——,' resumed Stanton, 'and is going to travel for a time to recruit his health. My cousin, Henry Stanton, has seen him, and has received directions about the business, and is coming almost directly. With re-

gard to you, Lyndon,' he continued, ' I thought that it would not be safe for you to go on without some guarantee that he would let you alone.'

' How is that to be done ?' asked Lyndon, in a low voice.

' I have arranged it,' said Stanton.

' Oh, Stanton ! I don't know how to thank you. But how have you managed it ?'

' Well, I have not managed it myself, for I felt as if I could not speak to George about it, and it is best not to write on such matters. I found, from what Dr. Morton said when you were getting better, that he had got some insight into the state of things between you and George, though he had no idea how it had been produced ; so I just explained what was necessary, without telling him exactly the facts, and he said that he would take George in hand. He spoke very kindly of you, Lyndon. Well, Dr. Morton saw George in London yesterday, and he made him understand that the only way for him to purchase immunity from publicity as to his share in the affair was to promise that he would refrain from injuring you in any way whatever. George knows that when Dr.

Morton undertakes anything he will carry it through, and that he is not very easily hood-winked; and he appears to have given in with a good grace. So you may make your mind quite easy about it, Lyndon.'

'Thank you, Stanton. It is very kind of you, and of Dr. Morton too.'

'Of course we shall keep up some intercourse with George,' continued Stanton, 'though I dare say it will not be much, as he will not be anxious to visit D—— often, I expect.'

'It would not be right to throw him overboard altogether,' replied Philip. 'The time may come when he will be changed.'

'Not on this side of the grave, I am afraid,' thought Stanton. He said nothing, however, but only shook his head sadly.

The cloth was by this time spread upon the grass, the corners being securely fastened with some of the large flints which lay about.

Whether it was the influence of the sea air, or of the pleasant company, or of both combined, did not appear, but all pronounced that never had ham and chicken, pasties and champagne, tasted so good, or strawberries and cream been so delicious. Everybody was in high



spirits, and Philip was so merry and full of fun that Fanny said she was afraid he was going to be the most troublesome boy of the three, a sentiment that delighted the young ones immensely.

Reginald had just given an account of his being caught in a storm during a tour in the Alps with some friends, and of their having had a narrow escape from being overwhelmed by an avalanche, when a sound was heard like distant thunder. All looked in the direction from which it appeared to have come, but there were only a few feathery streaks of cloud, which could not possibly have produced the effect. While they looked the sound was heard again, and then Harry exclaimed that it was the guns at the fortress on the island nearly opposite; and he told of the fright that he and Blanche had had one Coronation Day, or, rather, that Blanche had had, for he would not allow that he was frightened, though Blanche protested that he was as much frightened as she was. They were sitting at the time, he said, in the little cove at the other end of the hill, when they heard a faint sound, which grew in a few minutes alarmingly loud. It was like short,

quick thunder-claps, only, instead of being in the sky, it seemed to be among the cliffs on each side of them. As there was not a cloud to be seen, they thought it must be caused by an earthquake. They both rushed up the beach to Mrs. Mansfield, when quite suddenly there was perfect silence. Mrs. Mansfield had heard nothing. By listening intently they could just perceive the distant boom of a gun. It was the echo, which, by being thrown backwards and forwards from cliff to cliff, had produced so peculiar an effect.

Luncheon over, they wandered about the hill, gathering bouquets of rock cistus and of dyer's greenweed, and searching in the thick grass for the pink, wax-like flowers of the small woodruff, and the rich purple ones of the clustered bell-flower. The view from the top of the hill was a very fine one. To the south lay the vast expanse of the ocean, its azure surface just dimpled by the breeze, and flecked here and there with the snow-white sea-gulls which circled round the cliffs or were rocked on the tiny wavelets; while in the distance the sails of numerous ships, as they passed up or down the Channel, gave variety to the otherwise unbroken horizon-

line. A little to the westward rose a rocky island, the somewhat barren aspect of its rampart-like cliffs being softened by a thin haze, as it lay basking on the sunlit waters. To the north the view was more diversified, though, to an eye unaccustomed to the peculiarities of the scenery, it might appear to be rather monotonous and bare. The hills, which skirted the sea, and which broke away from the bay as its curve increased, showed many picturesque forms and beautiful slopes, suggesting pleasant rambles and long summer days spent in exploring their nooks and crannies. The prevailing character of the nearer landscape was that of billowy down, broken occasionally by farmsteads and villages, or by the belts of trees which surrounded a gentleman's hall and pleasure-grounds. In the far landscape several towns could be traced; many of the hill-tops were covered with trees, and there could be seen the general indications of a more richly wooded and highly cultivated country.

Natural scenery of every kind has a charm of its own, though mountain scenery, in its grandeur and sublimity, must carry away the palm. Next, perhaps, in the pleasure which

it yields to the beholder, must be placed that kind in which picturesqueness of form is combined with luxuriousness of vegetation—in which the almost infinite variety of shape and colour affords a relief to the mind that cannot be given by the contemplation of the severe and awful grandeur of the mountains, whose sublimity seems to us a shadowing forth of the irresistible might of Him who exists from eternity to eternity.

No scenery in which sea and rock are combined can be uninteresting; but the south-country hills suggest associations which have their own particular charm. They give a sense of loneliness and isolation, which, nevertheless, on a sunshiny summer day do not certainly amount to desolateness. On many of them there is no trace of man's handiwork except the numerous barrows which crown their summits, or the trenches which, more than a thousand years ago, were cut upon their slopes, and where the native Briton fought with desperate but undisciplined tenacity against the more civilised invader. One seems to be lifted above the noise and bustle of life, yet not high enough to be altogether beyond its reach, and a sense

of peace and restfulness, of freedom from little cares and troubles, steals into the mind. Not a sound reaches the wide hill-top save that of the lark's song from the blue ether above, and the scream of the gull from the cliff below.

Most of the party, however, either were too full of the exuberance of youthful spirits, or were under the influence of emotions which left them no leisure of mind or heart for contemplative reflection.

After they had wandered about the top of the hill for some time, Stanton proposed that they should go to the Fossil Forest, as it was called. Reginald said that he would stay with Mrs. Mansfield, as the time would seem so much longer to her if she were left alone. The rest accordingly descended a steep path that led to the lower part of the hill. It took some time to reach the edge of the cliff, and the further descent, though practicable, was awkward.

The situation of the Fossil Forest was a very peculiar one. It was a kind of broad ledge half-way down the face of the cliff, inclining upwards on the side towards the sea, so that there was no danger of slipping off. This ledge was broken into huge fantastic steps, which went up

and down at various angles in rough, picturesque confusion. Sometimes rising from the surface, sometimes embedded in the stone, were the stocks of giant trees, some of them with part of the trunk remaining, and others hollowed out like large basins.

The three girls sat about on the steps, or scrambled up and down, assisted by Philip or by Stanton, whichever happened to be the nearest; while the boys climbed about like monkeys, rather to the terror of Blanche. Philip, to whom she expressed her fears, said that he should have been doing the same if she had not been there.

It was pleasant to lean on the barrier that was formed by the top of the ledge, and to watch the waves dashing against the foot of the cliff.

‘Is it not almost time that we went back?’ asked Blanche, when they had been there some time. ‘Aunt will think us long. Where are we to get up to the top of the cliff?’

‘Farther on,’ said Harry.

Farther on they accordingly went, still on the same ledge, but gradually rising, until at length they came to a slope surmounted by an almost

perpendicular cliff, which appeared to offer but very uncertain footing. Its only recommendation seemed to be that there was not much of it, its height being not more than ten or twelve feet.

‘I shall never get up there without a pair of wings!’ said Blanche.

‘Oh yes, you will. I will take care of you,’ replied Philip.

She shook her head.

‘Don’t you go either, Philip.’

‘I shall not go and leave you here, certainly, Blanche,’ he answered.

Fanny and Kate both protested that they were not afraid of venturing, and of course Stanton was not. No one asked whether the boys were afraid.

‘May I help somebody up?’ inquired Tom.

‘No, certainly not,’ was Philip’s answer. ‘You are too “jingling,” as they say in this part of the world, to be trusted with anything more valuable than your own body. If you take care of that it will be as much as you can manage.’

‘Now, Harry, be careful,’ said Stanton; ‘for it is rather an awkward place.’



‘You won’t mind staying here for a few minutes, Blanche, whilst I take one of the others up,’ said Philip; ‘and then I will go back with you along the ledge. There is a nice place for you to sit down, and I shall be back directly.’

Blanche felt a little reluctant to be left in that lonely place; but however there was no help for it, as she did not like to prevent Philip from helping the others. He led her back to the ledge and seated her on one of the steps, where she remained with a pale cheek and trembling limbs, scarcely daring to listen, lest she should hear the noise of some one falling. She could see nothing, as the party had passed round a bend in the cliff. How long it seemed! Suppose Philip should slip in coming back! At the sound of falling stones, followed very soon by a shout, she grew sick and dizzy with apprehension, and her head seemed to turn round.

‘Blanche! What is the matter?’

‘Oh, Philip!’ she cried. ‘I was so frightened.’

‘My foolish little dove!’ he said, taking her in his arms and kissing her. ‘There was no danger, and they all managed splendidly. Stay



a little while and get quiet, Blanche, before we go on ;' and he soothed her with tender caresses.

Stanton had intended to help Miss Lyndon up the cliff ; but, as he turned round after giving Harry a few directions, he found that Miss Kate was close to him, and he could not very well pass her. It was, as he had said, an awkward place. He was obliged to leave his companion half-way up, while he mounted a few steps to a spot where he could obtain a firmer footing. In doing so he dislodged the stones that had so frightened Blanche, and he turned round in some alarm lest they should strike Philip and his sister, who he knew were following. They were nearer than he thought, being just behind him. They were, in fact, waiting for him and Miss Kate to pass on. Stanton, as he turned, met the earnest gaze of Fanny Lyndon's eyes. He could not mistake their expression ; it was that of deep, mournful, almost passionate affection.

For a moment he nearly forgot where he was, but Philip roused him by asking him whether he could manage. Stanton hastened on and pulled up his companion, who was then received by four hands stretched out eagerly from the edge

of the cliff. She was thankful to sit on the grass at the top to rest. Stanton then passed on Fanny to the aforesaid hands, the owners of which raised a loud shout at the successful conclusion of the adventure.

‘It is very well that Blanche did not try,’ observed Fanny, as she sat down beside her cousin.

‘It’s a very good thing indeed,’ said Tom. ‘However, she’ll be all right on the ledge. Harry, let us run on and meet them where they come up, or perhaps they’ll be waiting for us.’

Stanton sat down a little way from the edge of the cliff, looking over the sea, and saying nothing. The discovery that he had made filled him with a sense of deep delight.

Of the admirable qualities which Fanny possessed he had long been as much convinced as he had of the fascinations which in the first instance had attracted him; and he had not the slightest doubt that whenever she truly loved, all wish for coquetry would vanish. That he was the one who was destined to be the object of her affection, until he had met that tell-tale gaze, he had not the least idea. He had resolved

to keep his love shut close within his heart, that love which he felt could never be given a second time, and to see Fanny become the wife of another, without her having any idea that she had ever been more to him than an ordinary acquaintance. Now, he thought that he had a more than probable explanation of the alternating shy avoidance and sharp replies which had so often puzzled him in his intercourse with Fanny. His discovery of the state of her feelings towards him had caused his previous resolutions as to the course of his conduct to disappear. Every scruple had melted away, and it remained only to find a fitting time and place to bring his long-cherished wish to a consummation. He was roused from his reflections by the sound of Miss Lyndon's voice :

‘*Au revoir*, Mr. Mansfield,’ she said. ‘If you do not turn up by the time that we want to leave, we will send you a guide.’

They tripped away so fast that Stanton had some difficulty in overtaking them before they arrived at the place where it had been arranged that they should meet Blanche and Philip.

They found Tom and Harry amusing them-

selves by chasing each other along the edge of the cliff.

‘They are just going to come up,’ announced Tom. ‘They were *such* a time that I thought they must have slipped over, or something ; so I went and peeped, but there they were, all right. Oh, here they come.’

‘Almost tired, Blanche?’ asked Fanny, as the two reached the top of the rough ascent.

‘Nearly ; but we have to get up that great hill again.’

‘We had better go by the cart-track, which is the easiest way,’ said Stanton ; ‘though it is a long way round,’ he added.

‘We are going to bathe, down there where the fishing-boats are,’ said Tom.

‘You had better make haste, then,’ replied Fanny. ‘I suppose they will be all right, Philip?’

‘I will go with them,’ he said, ‘and see that they don’t come to grief. You can manage to climb the hill without me, Blanche?’

‘Oh yes. Do look after the boys, pray.’

The four proceeded up the path, which was a comparatively easy ascent. Most of the talking was done by the three ladies. In a short time

Blanche said that she should like to rest, on which Kate observed that she had just been wishing to do the same.

Blanche proposed that Fanny and Stanton should walk on, lest her aunt should be getting anxious. The two accordingly set off pretty briskly.

Fanny wondered how long her companion would remain without speaking. She determined that this time she would not break in upon reflections that appeared to be so absorbing. When they had reached a part of the path where an inequality in the side of the hill hid them from those below, Stanton said suddenly :

‘Miss Lyndon, can you love me?’

Fanny, taken by surprise, answered simply, ‘Yes.’

Stanton drew her to the bank, and they sat down, while he told her how he had long loved her, but that he had feared to speak lest he should not be able to win her love.

He had nearly finished his confession, when they were both startled by the sudden appearance of Master Tom, who had been climbing up the hill, not on the path, of course, like any-

body else, and had come upon them quite unexpectedly.

‘Oh, Stanton!’ he cried, ‘what is the matter? Fanny is not ill, surely?’

The hue of Fanny’s face did not give any countenance to such a supposition. Stanton withdrew his arm, and they both rose.

‘There is nothing the matter, my dear boy,’ said Stanton. And then, seeing that Tom still looked incredulous, he added, ‘Only I am going to be your brother.’

‘My brother! What do you mean?’

‘I am engaged to your sister.’

Tom, in his surprise, almost lost his footing on the edge of the path where he was standing. He recovered himself, however, and rushed off to meet the remainder of the party.

‘Mind what you are about,’ cried Philip, as Tom dashed up to them.

Tom whispered something in his brother’s ear, of which the others heard nothing but the word ‘Fanny.’

‘What do you mean?’ asked Philip.

‘Stanton!’ replied Tom.

‘Tom!’ said Philip, sternly, giving him an admonitory shake, ‘this is beyond a joke.’

‘It ain’t a joke,’ cried Tom; ‘it’s real. Stanton said so himself, and Fanny did not say it wasn’t.’

‘Well, really!’ said Philip. ‘I am surprised.’

‘I am so glad!’ cried Blanche.

‘I am glad too; but I am not much surprised,’ observed Cousin Kate, ‘for I began to think that she liked him.’

‘Because she abused him, I suppose?’ rejoined Philip.

They overtook Fanny and Stanton when they had almost reached Mrs. Mansfield.

Fanny and Kate walked away together along the trench that ran round the hill, and Stanton went on to tell his mother, who was delighted with the news.

‘You have changed your mind, Stanton,’ she remarked, ‘since you said that we had had enough of the Lyndons except Tom. I suppose you are ready to withdraw your statement that he is the best of the family?’

‘Well, no, I won’t withdraw it,’ replied her son; ‘but I will say that the others are as good—the young ones, I mean,’ he added. ‘But here are the “lovely donkey” and the white



sun-bonnet. I am sure Mrs. Mansfield is tired, and Harry here is almost done up.'

'No, I'm not,' declared Harry, stoutly.

Stanton went to take care of his mother; he would let no one else walk beside her as they went down the hill.

'Fanny,' said Philip, as they passed on together, 'Stanton is well enough for any one who can take a fancy to him.'

'I hope he is,' replied Fanny, trying to look very demure.

'I did not know that you meant that *you* could take a fancy to him.'

'I did not mean any such thing, Philip.'

'You did it without meaning it then, I suppose; or perhaps it is a very sudden affair, and the fancy came since Saturday.'

'Philip!'

'Well, I fell in love all at once. I was over-head in a minute; and I thought you might have done the same.'

'Here is Blanche coming to keep you in order,' said Fanny. 'Blanche, he's very naughty; come and scold him.'

'Don't believe her, Blanche. It strikes me that Stanton will catch it much oftener than I shall.'



‘You’ll deserve it more, at any rate,’ rejoined Fanny.

‘That’s perfectly true, I am afraid,’ said Blanche.

‘Now, that’s too bad!’ cried Philip. ‘I’m catching it already.’

‘Keep him well in hand, Blanche,’ said Fanny. ‘If he once gets the bit between his teeth, there will be nothing to be done with him at all.’

‘It’s a foul calumny!’ protested Philip. ‘You have no idea how meek I really am, Blanche, when I am not put upon.’

‘I have no idea at all,’ replied Blanche. ‘I have a great many discoveries to make, it seems.’

They went slowly down the road through the village, with its numerous draw-wells and its thatched cottages, built half of stone and half of mud; past the pretty new Gothic church, with its comfortable-looking rectory; and, lower down, the neat little iron chapel, until they reached the cove, where the steamer soon made its appearance.

In a few minutes they were on board, and then they glided over the quiet sea towards home.

The arrangements of the party were a little different from what they had been in coming, Fanny and Stanton being side by side, while the curate and Miss Kate looked after Mrs. Mansfield. Harry lay on one of the seats fast asleep, but Tom fidgeted about as lively as ever.

‘If that boy is not tired to-night he ought to be,’ observed Mrs. Mansfield; ‘for I don’t think he has been still one minute during the whole day, except when he was eating, and then he kept jumping up on one excuse or another most of the time.’

‘It is well that boys do get tired sometimes,’ replied Philip. ‘Though I cannot say that we very often have the benefit of that state of things with Tom.’

‘He is something like you,’ thought Mrs. Mansfield. ‘I only hope that when you are married you will not wear out your wife with your activity. Your business will occupy some of your energy, “that’s one blessing,” as Tom would say.’

## CHAPTER XIV.

## AN INTERVAL.

'Thus happily the days  
Of Thalaba went by.'

SOUTHEY.

MR. LYNDON was exceedingly gracious the next morning when Stanton paid him a visit. He expressed very great pleasure at the prospect of having him for a son-in-law. He was sure that his daughter would be supremely happy. He was only sorry that he could not give her a portion such as he should have wished ; but he stated that Philip had the management of all money matters, and Mr. Mansfield must see him about business arrangements.

It was an immense relief to Stanton to get the interview over ; not that he expected any

difficulty would be raised, but from the extreme dislike which he entertained towards his intended father-in-law.

Fanny was already 'supremely happy.' She went about the house with the blitheness of a bird. The long strain of her unrequited love, as she had deemed it, had been taken off. She had not now to hide an aching heart beneath a forced sprightliness, and her natural ease and gaiety of manner returned.

As for Tom, he was almost wild with happiness. Philip put him through a somewhat severe course of medical training, which he thought would tend to take the nonsense out of him. And so it did, during the time that he was studying; but when that was over, and he felt the rebound from the mental strain, he was, as Fanny said, 'worse than ever.'

Blanche, since her engagement, had felt as if she now only truly realised what it was to live in the complete exercise of all the powers of her nature. Every hour seemed full of life and of an interest which made it rich in thought and feeling. It was a source of exquisite delight to her to feel Philip, awakened as had been his soul to a fresh consciousness, looking to her not

so much for definite guidance as for gentle moulding, for sympathy in his new strivings, and for a tender cherishing of the somewhat fitful flame of his spiritual life. The expression of tranquil happiness that had been so characteristic of her face when Philip had first seen her, and which had become somewhat dimmed by the anxiety that intercourse with him had caused, had now returned; but the aspect of her calmness was more like that of the flowing river than of the unbroken stillness of the lake. Her happiness was deep and full, as if it welled up from some sweet source within the heart, and was not merely the effect of freedom from the touch of sorrow.

Stanton, of course, often spent his evenings at the Lyndons'; and Blanche was constantly fetched by one or other of the household, the Rev. Reginald generally either accompanying or following them. It appeared as if his association with the Lyndons had rubbed off some of the stiffness from that gentleman's demeanour: for it was generally remarked that he had become less formal in manner, and much more genial; also that he was less dogmatic in the expression of his opinions than formerly, and

more tolerant of those who differed from him. He and Philip occasionally had a skirmish on their various points of disagreement; but, as the latter dexterously avoided coming to close quarters until his friend's mind had become further advanced in the enlightening process which he perceived was going on, no unpleasant collisions had occurred.

While Philip was thus intent on marking the modifications which had taken place in the curate's character, that gentleman, and others beside, were not slow to note a change which had been going on in him. He was less abrupt and rough, and more considerate of others; less sudden and passionate in resentment under provocation; and, though he clung tenaciously to any opinion of the truth of which he was convinced, he stated it in a less offensive manner, and was more ready in his intercourse with others to dwell upon the points of agreement rather than upon those of difference; though, when engaged in an argument, he was as keen as ever in finding out the weak points in an opponent's case.

With regard to the discussion about the

existence of the spirit world and the immortality of the soul, he admitted, to the curate's great delight, that, whether or not the belief in them could be proved reasonable by the logical faculty alone, the objects and the attributes on which these trusts were fixed might be apprehended by the spiritual sense, the evidence of their reality being looked for within the soul.

The love and sympathy that Lyndon had received from Ainslie and his relations did more to lower the intellectual barriers between them than all the arguments which a keener intellect or a more subtle art than were Reginald's could have brought to bear upon the questions at issue.

Mr. Lyndon seemed willing to contribute to the general harmony and enjoyment by keeping out of the way as much as possible.

He took care that his intended connections should have no chance of witnessing any of those scenes which had formerly made the household so miserable. The provision that Philip made for him was, he felt, more than in the circumstances he could reasonably have expected; and he was, consequently, in an

amiable frame of mind towards his son, besides being anxious that no untoward accident should happen which would make the proposed connection with his family appear undesirable in the eyes of such eligible partners for life as were Miss Blanche Ainslie and Mr. Stanton Mansfield.



## CHAPTER XV.

## THE NEW RECTOR.

‘He either fears his fate too much,  
Or his deserts are small,  
Who dares not put it to the touch,  
To gain or lose it all.’

MARQUIS OF MONTROSE.

A FEW days before the weddings, Reginald, now the rector, the old rector having been moved a step upwards on the clerical ladder, went to London. He stayed rather longer than his sister expected. He came at last, however, and during dinner he discoursed with his ordinary quiet manner upon the various persons whom he had seen during his journey. They had sat down in the drawing-room, and Blanche was just thinking that it was very likely that

Philip would come to ask her to go for a walk with him, when Reginald said :

‘ I have been to Chatham during my absence, Blanche.’

‘ Indeed ! I did not know that you had any friends there.’

‘ Nor have I.’

‘ You went on business merely, I suppose ?’ said Blanche, as he evidently expected her to say something.

‘ Well, it was a matter of business, in one way. I went to see some one of whom you have heard as living at Chatham.’

‘ I don’t remember hearing of any one there, except Philip’s uncle.’

‘ I have been to see him,’ replied Reginald. ‘ I have asked of him permission to wed his daughter.’

‘ Oh, Reginald, I am so glad !’

‘ I introduced myself,’ he continued, ‘ as the brother of the lady whom his nephew was going to marry. He received me very kindly, Blanche. I have nothing to complain of on that score.’

‘ And she likes you, I suppose, Reginald ?’

‘ She does not dislike me,’ he replied modestly.

‘Further than that I have not attempted to ascertain. In such matters, Blanche, there is a reticence which I think every gentleman ought to observe. In that respect Philip Lyndon did not conduct himself altogether in a satisfactory manner.’

Blanche could not help smiling, as she reflected how very far from satisfactory her stormy interviews with her lover had been, and how she used to wish that he could be dismissed by the employment of any ordinary means.

‘I don’t hold him up as a model of perfection, Reginald,’ she said.

‘You could hardly do that, my dear Blanche,’ observed her brother ; ‘though I must confess that his character appears to me to be very much more developed and elevated than it was when I first knew him, about a year ago ; and far be it from me to look with scorn upon any one who has struggled as he has done to plant his feet on the heavenward path. We must not expect all our friends to be at exactly the same stage in the journey. Some whose feet were not early set in the right way must necessarily be behind ; and in such cases it is the duty of those in front to cheer them on with love and kind-

ness. Miss Kate,' he continued, after a pause, 'will make an admirable clergyman's wife. She is clever, and has good judgment. She is also kind and energetic, and she is very sensible.'

'Your estimation of her is very correct, I believe,' said Blanche, smiling. 'I wish you success, with all my heart, my dear Reginald.'

'I don't know, but I cannot help fancying,' he answered, 'that I have some reasonable grounds for hope.'

Reginald was silent for a few minutes; doubtless conning over in his own mind the various indications on which his 'reasonable grounds' were based.

Blanche racked her memory to discover any evidences of her brother's having been attracted towards Miss Kate or of that lady's feelings towards him. She could recall nothing in the manner of either of them that had been at all suggestive; but she reflected, that they must necessarily have been thrown much together, when she and Philip had been occupied with each other, and Fanny and Stanton had been in the same condition. She had noticed that her brother and Kate had had a great deal

to say to each other about school and parish work, which on one or two occasions he had explained by saying, that he had been telling Miss Kate of such and such an occurrence, and that she had been relating how a similar circumstance had arisen at Manchester. Just before Kate's departure she had begun to think that there must be some unusual complication which required much consultation to arrange satisfactorily, but owing to the absorbing nature of the interest which occupied her she had forgotten it.

'The Lyndons,' Reginald resumed at length, 'though at first sight we, and particularly myself, were prepossessed against them, and not altogether unjustly, I must confess—the Lyndons—at least the younger ones, I ought to say—have shown that they have in them qualities which, under favourable circumstances, form the foundation of estimable characters. That they have not had these favourable circumstances is much to be deplored. The determination which Philip has exhibited in freeing himself from the difficulties into which his sins had brought him, and also in departing from his evil ways, cannot be too highly commended,

But here he is.—You can come in this way, Lyndon, if you like.’

The object of her brother’s journey was communicated by Blanche as a great secret to Philip. She was surprised to find that the matter was not quite so much a secret as she expected.

Philip laughed, and his eyes sparkled with fun and roguery as he told Blanche that he had been quietly watching the progress of the affair, but that he had determined to keep Ainslie’s secret, and had also refrained from rallying Kate on the subject, a piece of self-denial for which Blanche gave him great credit.

‘I was determined not to be caught napping this time,’ added Philip, ‘as I was about Fanny and your cousin. Reginald has been very quiet, but he has not been so sly as Stanton was ; and now that I am going into port with a fair wind and all sails set, I have leisure to look about and see who is floundering among the breakers.

‘Well, I hope Reginald will get off the breakers.’

‘I don’t think that he is in a very desperate state,’ was the reply. ‘He sees light ahead, I fancy ; and if he is mistaken—well, I hope he

will bear his cross meekly, and submit to the inevitable with Christian patience.'

'He'll do better than you did, then.'

'Well, it was not "the inevitable" in my case, you see ; so there was no use in submitting to it,' was the laughing rejoinder. 'And as to bearing my cross meekly, why, we must let "bygones be bygones," and make a fresh beginning on Tuesday, and bear all future crosses with exemplary patience.'

Cousin Kate came the next day, and on the following one they all went for a picnic to an old British camp about two miles distant.

During luncheon Philip had been very full of fun and mischief, though all except Blanche were ignorant of the especial cause that inspired him.

Soon afterwards Stanton and Fanny strolled away to look at some particular point in the view. Philip suddenly marched off in the opposite direction with Blanche ; and Reginald was left with Kate, the two boys being occupied in improving their digestion by rolling down the steep embankments.

'There now !' exclaimed Philip, when they had been walking along the trench for a short

time, we shall have Fanny and Stanton coming back and interrupting the Rev. Reginald before he has had time to tell his "tender tale." We had better go and pounce upon them.'

Pouncing upon them was, however, not so easy, Philip and Blanche having come along the trench in the opposite direction to that which had been taken by Fanny and Stanton. Philip, therefore, pulled Blanche up one side and down the other of the steep embankment; then by passing along the second trench, and again mounting the ridge, they came upon the objects of their search, just in time to prevent the catastrophe.

Blanche was inclined to laugh at Philip's anxiety not to disturb the lovers, but he said that he had not yet forgotten his own feelings when he found Blanche in the arbour, and how savage he should have been if any one had come upon the scene at that moment; adding that he had generally been interrupted just at a critical point.

In about half-an-hour it occurred to Stanton to wonder what had become of the others, and Philip was just suggesting that perhaps they had lost themselves among the series of trenches



which formed their camp, when they made their appearance.

Fanny and Kate walked off together as they had done before on a similar occasion, and Reginald proceeded to make a formal announcement.

‘I dare say that you will be surprised, Lyndon,’ he said, ‘to hear that I am your cousin’s accepted lover.’

‘If I am not surprised, I am very glad,’ replied Philip, gravely, but with laughing eyes.

‘Bravo! I had no idea of that!’ cried Stanton, while Blanche smiled.

‘It struck me,’ continued Reginald, ‘that Christmas will be a good time for the wedding, especially as the rectory will then be vacant, and can be prepared in a suitable manner for the reception of my wife; and by that time also, my sister and yours, Lyndon, will be sufficiently at liberty to superintend the arrangements.’

‘I am sure they will both be exceedingly happy,’ said Philip.

‘I did not mention that to Miss Kate, thinking that it would be premature,’ observed Ainslie.

‘Hallo!’ cried Philip, springing on one side

to avoid being knocked down by Tom, who at that moment came tumbling down the ridge, followed by Harry. 'Is that a proper proceeding for a gentleman who is going to be cousin to the rector?'

'What do you mean?' asked Tom, picking himself up and staring at his brother with wide-open eyes.

'Reginald is going to be your cousin.'

'He ain't going to marry Cousin Kate, surely?' said Tom, with eyes rounder than ever.

'You ask him if he ain't,' replied Philip, laughing.

'Well I never! I shall have to give up tricks for ever and a day,' sighed Tom, at which Philip laughed heartily.

'You'll have until Christmas, Tom,' he said; 'so you had better make the most of the time.'

'Oh my! Shan't I!' cried Tom, giving a caper. 'Harry,' he added, 'ain't it a good thing you made that mistake about going for Old Wood that day, or Phil could never have got married, nor Fanny, nor Cousin Kate either.'

‘That would have been a state of things!’ said Philip.

‘Cousin Reginald,’ said Harry to the rector, who had been talking to Stanton, ‘don’t you think that the next time you are poorly you had better send for Mr. Wood?’

‘I am afraid, Harry, that it is too late,’ replied the rector. ‘As we have had the other so long, we shall have to make the best we can of him; and as far as I am concerned I doubt that it is a bad case for poor old Mr. Wood; perhaps you will take pity on him.’

‘Well, I shall have to think about it, you know,’ said Harry, as Reginald turned away to meet Miss Kate. ‘You said one day that such a step should not be taken without serious consideration.’

‘It is a good thing to make a mistake sometimes,’ observed Tom, demurely, as Harry turned round.

‘If only they are of the right sort,’ replied Philip. ‘Mine,’ he added, shaking his head, ‘have been unfortunately of the other kind.’

‘Like the medicine business,’ interposed Harry.

‘Well, if other folk’s mistakes bring yours

right, it will be all the same,' said Tom ; and he turned a somerset. ' Catch me who can !' he cried, as he got on his feet.

He darted off, followed by Harry and Philip in a scamper, in which running, climbing, and tumbling seemed to be in about equal proportions. The trenches and ridges were soon alive with their shouts and laughter as they chased each other, sliding or rolling down, and scrambling up again with marvellous rapidity.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## THE WEDDINGS.

‘ I knew thee from the first, a promised blessing,  
Long look’d for, and most graciously supplied.  
I know thee now, a treasure I’m possessing,  
A rich heart’s treasure, that must aye abide ;  
For aught so beautiful was surely given  
From the immortal things of bounteous Heaven.’

LINUS.

THE wedding presents that poured in upon Blanche and Stanton were numerous and costly, both from their friends at a distance and from those in the immediate neighbourhood. The Lyndons did not expect, neither did they receive, many. The principal ones were from Dr. Morton and from Mrs. Carrington, who sent a handsome French clock for Philip, and a bracelet for his sister.

The weddings, which took place about the middle of September, were rather gay ones, though the share of the guests which was furnished by the Lyndons was but small.

Amongst them were Uncle Tom and Jones, the latter having come down to take charge of the medical department, with Mr. Wood in the background in case of any especial difficulty. Uncle Tom was a rather fine-looking man. He appeared to be much more genial and good-tempered than his brother, but he had something of that dissipated air which had struck the Mansfields so unpleasantly in Philip's father.

The knots were tied by the Rev. Reginald, assisted by a cousin who had come from the north expressly for that purpose.

With what feelings did Philip approach the altar and kneel at Blanche's side—feelings of deep gratitude, almost of awe, that he, the unworthy one, should be allowed at last to enter on the sweet path which now lay before him, its duties and its pleasures transfigured in the light of holy love !

The expression of Stanton's countenance was one of unusual animation ; and Blanche's sweet

face was full of feeling ; while Philip and his sister appeared much more subdued than was their wont. Tom and Harry conducted themselves with becoming gravity. Tom, indeed, was, to use his own favourite expression, ‘as demure as an old cow.’

The breakfast was at Mrs. Mansfield's, as was also the party in the evening ; although, as Tom said, they ought to have had half of it, as one of the weddings belonged to them. It was Master Tom's private opinion that the party was rather a stupid affair, the best part of the company, that was the two brides and the two bridegrooms, being away.

‘When I am married,’ he said to Harry, ‘I will have the party the night before the wedding ; it will be much more sensible ;’—a sentiment in which his friend heartily concurred.

There was a treat for the school-children, however, the next day, at which Tom enjoyed himself immensely, being master of the revels, and keeping every one alive with fun and frolic.

Cousin Kate stayed to keep house at the Lyndons during the absence of the bride and bridegroom. Tom found it rather dull work. He felt like a fish out of water without Philip ;

and Jones was so dreadfully lazy, and had no sense.

Ainslie, of course, often came in the evenings, when Tom would slip off to Mrs. Mansfield's; but it did not seem half right there without Stanton.

Soon after the wedding came the news of the death of Colonel Carrington; and his widow returned to the Hall.

Reginald hastened to call upon her in her bereavement. He was much struck by her chastened manner, and also by the interest that she expressed in Philip and his sister. He could not help reflecting, as he left the Hall, that the death of its owner had relieved him from a position of considerable embarrassment; for it would have been impossible for him, as the rector, to avoid coming in contact with its inmates, and yet he could not have associated with Colonel Carrington without, on proper and fitting occasions, expressing disapproval of the kind of life which he led.

Mrs. Carrington lost no time in calling on the newly-wedded couples when the honeymoon was over. Fanny told her husband, as they were driving home after their return call, of her own



great wish to visit at the Hall, and how angry she had been with Philip for not letting her go to the dance there.

The months before Christmas passed so quickly, that there was scarcely time for the brides to settle down into the routine of their new life before the bustle of another wedding came on.

They had had, indeed, to begin the preparations at the Rectory very soon after their return. As Blanche said, it was almost too much to have to get ready her cousin's and her brother's houses within so short a time, besides getting settled in her own. Fanny, however, was quite in her element; and Tom said, that he wished they would have a wedding every three months, and that Phil and Stanton had managed very badly to have theirs both on one day.

Cousin Kate had gone back to Manchester to 'wind up' her affairs there, as Tom expressed it, and had returned a week before the wedding to assist in the final preparations.

Uncle Tom, of course, came from Chatham; but neither Mr. Lyndon nor George made his appearance, both being afflicted with very bad colds just at that period, which in the severe

weather made it unadvisable for them to travel. George had been in a distant part of the Continent at the time of his brother's wedding.

Cousin Kate made a pretty little bride, and the Rev. Reginald appeared more interesting, Philip thought, than he had ever before seen him.

Of course there had to be another party, this time at the Lyndons', at which Mr. Ainslie's particular friends in the parish were invited; and of course the school-children must have another treat, though Reginald expressed a fear that they would be quite spoiled with so much festivity; on which Tom observed that he thought there was not much danger, as he supposed neither Mr. Ainslie nor his sister would be getting married again for a long time to come. 'Phil,' he added, 'does not look as if he meant to give his wife a chance just yet.'

'I mean to enjoy the party thoroughly,' said Tom to Philip, after the breakfast was over, and the bride and bridegroom had departed.

'Did you not enjoy the other, then?' asked Philip.

'No, not much. I wanted you and Stanton, and Blanche and Fanny.'

‘And I suppose it would not do to turn a somerset in Mrs. Mansfield’s drawing-room, or to stand on your head. What did you do?’

‘Oh, I danced,’ said Tom.

‘Indeed! Whom did you get to dance with you?’

‘Well, there was the difficulty. Grown-up young ladies do not care to dance with a boy like me; and besides, I did not like to ask ’em. I danced with Cousin Kate, and with little Rose Stanton. She’s a very nice little thing, Phil.’

‘Henry Stanton’s little girl. Yes, I think she is. How did Harry manage?’

‘Well, he danced with Rose, sometimes, and I looked on.’

‘And when you danced with Rose, he looked on, I suppose?’ said Philip, laughing.

‘Harry is older than I am, and taller, you know,’ replied Tom; ‘and some of them thought he was grown up, I think. Besides, he knows more people than I do, so he managed better.’

‘Well, you’ll have three strings to your bow to-night, so I should think you’ll do. I would dance with you with pleasure if it were accord-

ing to the established usages of society, but I am afraid that would be as foreign to the programme as your turning a somerset would be.'

Tom enjoyed the party very much. His brother took care that he should not feel lost in the company of so many who were older than himself. Philip was determined that Tom should not suffer from that want of guidance which had been such an evil in his own early life ; and he felt that the maintenance of a perfect and constant sympathy between himself and Tom would be the best means of effecting this end. He thought that Tom would not be likely to go far wrong while he made his brother his confidant in every thought and feeling.

The winter months passed rapidly away, and were succeeded by those of spring. The three households were blessed in the quiet enjoyment of domestic pleasures and of family intercourse. Blanche was perfectly happy. Philip's affection, while it retained the character of an almost absorbing passion, which it had borne from the first, was true and tender, and enveloped her in an atmosphere of ever fresh joy and gladness. Occasionally, the shadow of which he had warned her on their first engage-

ment would come over him, as some trifling incident, in particular moods, would bring back the remembrance of his sin and of the terrible sufferings through which he had passed; but the touch of a gentle hand upon his shoulder, or the sweet kiss of love, would shed a healing balm upon his troubled spirit; the clouded brow would brighten, and the dark eyes would beam with a sweet and steadfast hope.

It was with a heart deeply stirred with joy and gratitude that Philip, one glorious summer morning, held in his arms his first-born son. He made an earnest vow that the pure young spirit entrusted to his care should be kept, as far as it was in his power, undarkened by the stain of sin, and should, as the years passed on, become strong and resolute in virtue.

‘Well, he is a comical little concern,’ exclaimed Tom, to whom his brother showed his treasure. ‘To think of our ever having been like that! But I suppose he will be all right in a little while. You will call him Phil, won’t you? He seems to be dark, like you? Why,’ he exclaimed, interrupting himself, ‘if I ain’t turned into Uncle Tom all at once! That is odd. It will be jolly when he’s old enough to

ride and snowball, and all that. I may teach him to ride, mayn't I, Phil ?

'We shall see how steady you are by that time,' replied Philip, smiling.

'In another year we shall have his birthday to keep,' continued Tom. 'It was a blessing it did not come on mine. We've got two wedding-days to keep, and a jolly lot of birthdays ; and Rose Stanton told me yesterday that they are going to have a party on her birthday next week, and that I am to come ; so that makes another, Phil.'

## CHAPTER XVII.

## FIVE YEARS AFTER.

‘The kiss,  
The woven arms, seem but to be  
Weak symbols of the settled bliss,  
The comfort, I have found in thee.  
But that God bless thee, dear, who wrought  
Two spirits to one equal mind,  
With blessings beyond hope or thought,  
With blessings which no words can find.’

THE MILLER'S DAUGHTER.

SEVERAL years had passed over the little town of D——. At each succeeding spring the elms in the Walks had hung out their tassels, and the chestnuts had raised their waxen cones. The summer sunshine had flooded the wealth of greenery with gold, and the autumn winds had torn the tinted leaves from the interlacing

branches, which the snow of winter had again clothed with fairy beauty.

To the Rectory, and to the two houses on the Walks, the years had brought more significant change than could be indicated by the budding and the fading leaves, by the blooming or the resting season.

The sound of merry little voices and of pattering feet was heard upon the floors, and tiny hands interfered with everything.

Of the two who had slipped so quietly out of their once familiar home circles, Mr. Lyndon had perished in his devotion to the shrine at which he had so long worshipped ; and George Mansfield maintained a fashionable, if not altogether reputable, position.

Harry had been regularly installed in his cousin's office, and Tom had pursued his studies at college with ability and industry, and had gained well-earned distinction.

'Blanche, are you not ready?' asked Philip Lyndon, as, attired in evening dress, he came from the direction of the surgery, and went half-way upstairs, two steps at a time.

'I am coming in two minutes. The children have hindered me,' was the answer.



The impression which Philip Lyndon's appearance gave was that of a man in the full exercise and enjoyment of all the capabilities of his nature, possessing a vigorous physical frame, an ardent, energetic temperament, and an unwearied activity and perseverance, all under the control of a resolute will, and softened and chastened by the glow of deep affections.

He went into the garden, gathered a few roses, and was returning, when the sound of a quick step on the gravel made him turn his head, and he beheld a tall, slim, brown-cheeked youth, with bright, earnest eyes, and the down just coming on his lip.

'Tom!' cried Philip, 'you are come at last. You are so late that we had given you up.'

'I think the train was rather late, Phil,' was the reply. 'But I met Rose Stanton as I came from the station.'

'And you stopped talking to her, I suppose. You will be just in time, if you make haste, to go with us to the Hall. Blanche will be down directly. It is Mrs. Carrington's wedding-day, you know.'

'Oh; it is to-day, is it? I hope the bride-

groom is a different sort of man from his cousin.'

'Carrington? Oh, he is a capital fellow. We were at the breakfast. Splendid affair it was, too; and there are going to be grand doings to night. You had better make haste and get ready. The Mansfields and the Ainslies will be there too.'

'But, Phil, I told you that I met Rose Stanton, and——'

'Well, what did she say?' asked Philip, as Tom hesitated.

'She did not say much; but——'

'But what, my dear boy?'

'Why, I am engaged to her, Phil.'

'You, Tom?' cried Philip, in great amazement.

'Well, you see,' said Tom, 'I've liked her a great while, Phil, and I had made up my mind to tell you all about it when I came home this time. But I just met her in the Walks, and it was such a nice opportunity, and I asked her, Phil, and she agreed.'

'And you really know your own mind, Tom, and are sure that it is not a fancy?'

'I am quite sure of that, Phil,' said Tom;

and he looked so earnest that his brother could not doubt him.

‘Thank God, Tom!’ he said fervently, ‘that you have been saved from what I went through.’

‘Rose said,’ continued Tom, ‘that she was going to stay with Mrs. Mansfield while the others went out, as she had sprained her foot, and could not dance, and that was how she came to be sitting in the Walks; and Rose was sure that, if I would come to Mrs. Mansfield’s, she would be very glad to see me.’

‘Oh, oh! I see. That is better than going to the Hall,’ said Philip.

At this moment the door opened, and a bonnie dark-eyed little fellow of about five years old came in and rushed up to Philip.

‘Oh, papa! may we have Rough in the garden?’ he cried.

‘The garden, indeed! No. You will want him in the drawing-room next.’

‘Blanchie and Fan and Tommy are come, and Stanton and I are going to teach Fan to ride.’

‘You teach her? You don’t know yourself, you rogue.’

‘Yes, I do. Dick showed me.’

Philip jumped up his little boy, holding him as high as he could reach, to his intense delight. Just as he was descending, with his arms and legs all in such activity that it was difficult to tell which were which, he caught sight of the new arrival; and as soon as he was on his feet he rushed off, shouting :

‘Uncle Tom! Uncle Tom’s come to play with us!’

‘Your work is cut out for you, you see, Tom,’ said Philip.

‘Well, I suppose I must go and have a game with them,’ was the reply.

Blanche at this moment entered, her face more lovely than ever, radiant as it was with the perfect happiness of satisfied affection. She greeted Tom with a sister’s love, and received Philip’s news with expressions of mingled surprise and joy.

‘But, Tom,’ she said, after they had talked a short time, ‘you have had no dinner.’

‘I don’t want any,’ replied Tom. ‘But Rose and I thought that I could have a cup of tea at Mrs. Mansfield’s.’

‘Upon my word, you seem to have settled

everything,' said Philip. 'Perhaps you have decided upon a house ?'

'Well, it struck me, Phil, as I came up the Walks, that I should like to live at No. 3.'

'There, did I not say so ?' cried Philip. 'It was to be sold the other day,' he added ; 'and I bought it, just ready for you, Tom.'

'That is jolly ! But we shall not want it for a little while.'

'Oh ! you mean to give the people time to get out of the house, then ?'

'And to have it done up, too, I suppose,' said Blanche.

'Yes ; we shall give plenty of time for that.'

'We shall not be in time at the Hall unless we make haste,' said Philip.

As Blanche and Philip drove out of the gate they saw Rough, the Shetland pony, which was not much larger than a dog, and as shaggy as a bear, with Blanchie and Fan on his back, under the superintendence of Uncle Tom and Dick ; while little Phil, Stantie, and Tommy were shouting all at once, and tugging at Rough in different directions.

'Blanche,' said Philip, as they drove down the avenue towards the Hall, 'the cherishing

of a pure and true affection is one of the best influences in the moulding of a good and noble character. If Tom,' he added, 'has a wife half as good as I have, Blanche, he will experience some of the sweetest and holiest pleasures which this world can give.'

THE END.



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